

**University of West London**

**PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE IN THE KINGDOM OF  
SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES:  
WESTERN THEORY, LOCAL CULTURE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the last two decades public relations has developed and expanded in some parts of the Arab Middle East much more than in others. The most likely reason for this is the differences in the political and socio-economic environment (Sunil, 2004). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are very different countries: KSA is a conservative monarchy while UAE is a federal and more liberal state. The aim of this research is to investigate how public relations is practised in each of the two countries, and how the public relations profession is affected by the prevailing cultural, political and socio-economic environment in each country.

For the purposes of this research, a combined methods approach is chosen as it can be seen as advantageous to this study. Quantitatively, the study investigates the public relations models that are most applicable in KSA and UAE. The first questionnaire is based on James Grunig's (1984) four public relations models plus the personal influence model (Sriramesh, 1992) and the cultural interpreter model (Lyra, 1991). The second questionnaire is based on Broom's (1982) practitioner's role measure. Qualitatively, the study investigates journalists' opinions on the performance of public relations practitioners in both KSA and UAE. In addition, substantial theoretical background is provided in order to contextualise the emerging field of public relations in the Middle East.

The results of this study have identified two characteristics of public relations models practices in KSA and UAE. Firstly, instead of Grunig's (1984, 1992) four original public relations models, the two international public relations models, the cultural interpreter model and the personal influence model, are the most frequently practiced models in both KSA and

UAE. The present study found that the cultural interpreter model is the most frequently practiced public relations model reported in UAE, and the second most frequently practiced model is the personal influence model. In contrast, practitioners in KSA are practicing the personal influence model the most and the cultural interpreter model comes next. The two-way symmetrical model is fairly practiced although the use of research as a tool to gauge the needs of the public is something that both KSA and UAE relations practitioners are evidently struggling to embrace.

The finding of the present study also shows that practitioners in both KSA and UAE are functioning mainly as “cultural mediators” and “technicians”, rather than “managers”, as they show a limited management involvement in public relations itself.

In summary, the findings of the present study contribute to theories of public relations and support the position that public relations practitioners with two-way asymmetrical communication and a management perspective are more likely to be found in organisations working within political and socio-economic environments that are moving towards democracy.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background**

With the exception of a few country profiles, public relations (PR) scholarship has lagged behind in its study of the practice in non-Western countries including the Arab countries, leaving a large part of the globe under-studied and well outside the dominant discourse of ‘Western-dominated’ public relations practice and scholarship (Al-Kandari and Gaither, 2011). This state of affairs has also been compounded by the fact that until recently, public relations literature has been largely influenced by American textbooks worldwide, despite the fact that most of them make very little or no reference to how public relations is practiced in different parts of the world (Szondi, 2009).

Therefore, scholars see an urgent need for the sharing of global public relations experience and case studies and, most importantly, research that would lead to the formulation of valid theories, models, and paradigms. Coombs (1995) survey of public relations articles in scholarly journals in an eleven-year period discovered a very slow pace for the internationalising of public relations research. "The vast majority of the published articles (over 90 percent) make no reference to culture or to countries other than the United States. Over the eleven-year period, there appears to be no clear trend toward increasing the percent of international, cultural, or cross-cultural articles" (Coombs, 1995).

However, Grunig J. (2009) advocates that the global theory (Verčič, Grunig and Grunig, 1996; Sriramesh and Verčič, 2003; 2009) is a normative theory that argues that public

relations will be most effective throughout most parts of the world when it follows the generic principles and applies them with appropriate variations for local cultural, political, social and economic conditions.

## **1.2. Context of the study**

The present study evolved from one theoretical framework: the environment that influences the practices of public relations within specific countries or regions. In the IABC Excellence Study, organisations are viewed as organic structures that are located in their environments. Thus, environmental factors will affect organisational processes as well as the public relations practices of an organisation. For example, societal culture will affect organisational culture, and organisational culture will determine strategic choices of specific public relations models. Culbertson and Chen (1996) have also argued that a nation's political system and culture do shape the practice of public relations in that particular nation or country.

Among the international public relations studies, Verčič, et al. (1996) and Sriramesh and White (1992) emphasise the significance of studying international public relations as well as linking it to environmental elements, such as culture, activism, and the media (Sriramesh, et al., 1999). More specifically, after the IABC Excellence Study yielded a review of normative variables or generic principles, Verčič, Grunig and Grunig (1996) explained the importance of identifying the political-economic system, culture, the extent of activism, the level of development, and the media system, that could influence the practice of public relations.

Sriramesh and Verčič (2003) explain that “identifying the impact of environmental variables on public relations practice helps increase the ability to predict which strategies and

techniques are better suited to a particular organisational environment” (p.1). They further define the contextual variables previously identified by Verčič, Grunig and Grunig (1996). and categorise them into three factors: a country’s infrastructure, societal culture, and media environment. Sriramesh and Verčič (2000; 2001; 2003) used the following five socioeconomic and political aspects of the countries as they are essential in order for the public relations practitioner (PRP) to contribute to the effectiveness of society as well as organisations.

- The government’s performance - government of a social system will affect the performance of the entire organisation existing within the system. The structure and management philosophy of the governance structure will also determine the way organisations must operate and will influence the management styles of openness of organisations as well as values of the management teams operating within the social system.
- The communication advancement - refers to the public access to communication technology advancements, the degree of freedom of speech and the media, the degree of recognition on the part of the media of its third estate responsibility, the existence of a check and balance relationship between journalism and PR as well as the literacy level of the public and its knowledge of international language.
- Social system’s attitudes towards social responsibility - refers to the citizens' and organisations' attitudes towards social responsibility and how individual and corporate demonstration is encouraged by the system.
- The level of democracy achieved - the world is becoming increasingly democratic in social structure owing to global communication and people learning more about each other. PR is tied to the empowerment of public opinion as a force in society.

Democracy increases the opportunity for public opinion to influence social system decisions and actions, and therefore PR as a profession can be directly related to public opinion empowerment advancements. The development of open-record laws, consumer protection laws, the restriction on lobbying and on political contributions and the development of unions have all increased the need for organisations to communicate within the social system of which they form a part.

- The economic system - economics has always been a driving force in societies. Investor confidence and public support for the economic system are essential for social stability. The existence of corporations with stockholders, the diversity of owners with diverse interests, the creation of annual reports, and the understanding of economic dependencies and interdependencies of social systems have created a need for communication that mandates PR practices.

In this context, the present research provides an overview of the growth and development of public relations in two Arab countries the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. It examines the public relations practice in both countries against the background of the framework suggested by Sriramesh and Verčič (2003; 2009) who contended that public relations can only be truly understood in the context of a country's political system, level of economic development, and its culture, as well as the state of its media system.

Despite its limitations, the excellence approach has been chosen in the present study, because the 'four models' public relations and excellence theory as proposed by Grunig and Hunt in 1984 remains one of the most dominant theoretical perspectives in public relations (Laskin, 2009). Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2002) emphasised that the findings of their research can be applied to other countries. Studies in countries such as the United States, India, Taiwan,

and Greece (Grunig, J., et al., 1995) have demonstrated that the four models describe the practice of public relations internationally. These findings lead to a conclusion that the four models could also be practiced by public relations practitioners in Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates.

Moreover, the theory has provided a strong basis for the development of public relations practice over the past two decades, especially in under-studied countries and regions like the Arab countries. The present study agrees with Sriramesh and Enxi (2004) when they said:

*“We use two concepts developed in Western cultures: the models of public relations and the roles of individual public relations practitioners. We are sensitive to the pitfalls of using Western concepts to study non-Western cultures, but currently we have no conceptual frameworks that are specific to regions such as Asia. Until such frameworks are developed, we are forced to use existing theoretical frameworks that have been developed and tested in the West.” (pp.1-2)*

Similarly, the present study is exploring the close and complex interactions between the models and roles of public relations on one hand and the environment that influences the practices in two Arab countries on the other, using Western concepts as no Arabian conceptual frameworks is yet available. Until such frameworks are developed, the present study accepts the use of the existing Western theoretical frameworks.

Additionally, the present study found that the majority of the models, principles and theories of public relations that are most frequently tested in international research have typically



compared public relations practices in different countries using James Grunig's four models of public relations or Dozier and Broom's four hierarchical roles (Grunig, J., et al., 1995; Sriramesh, et al., 1999; Huang, 2001; Sriramesh and Verčič, 2003; Bardhan, 2003). In fact, the present research was encouraged by these studies in investigating the public relations practices in KSA and UAE using James Grunig's four models of public relations and Dozier and Broom's (1995) roles of public relations practitioners. Therefore, the present study is based on the proposition that public relations theory can be applied globally.

### **1.3. Purpose of the study**

In the last two decades, public relations in the Middle East has witnessed development and expansion in some countries and not in others because of the differences in the political, economic and social environment (Sunil, 2004). Despite of the use of the American theorists Grunig and Hunt's (1984) models of public relations by those organisations and practitioners, Kruckeberg (1996) stated that the models used in that geo-political region are not identical to US models, or to those in other Western countries.

In parallel, the Middle East has experienced a soaring demand for public relations with more than 230 public relations firms now operating in the region (Woodcraft, 2006). Overall, it has been noticed that the industry is growing between 10% and 15% yearly across the Middle East. Robinson (n.d) indicates that the "in-house sector is growing and no blue chip business in the region would communicate without considering public relations as an element of the communication mix".

Regardless of its expansion and growth, the public relations profession in the Arab states is still suffering from a wide range of problems, malpractice, and misconceptions. Therefore, the aim of this explanatory study is to explore and investigate how public relations practice, affected by the political and socio-economic system, prevails and dominates in two Middle Eastern Arab countries: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are two very different countries: a conservative kingdom and a federal, and more liberal, state.

The criteria for selecting these two countries are:

- KSA and UAE represent countries in two different political, socioeconomic systems. A conservative monarchy and a federal and more liberal state.
- KSA and UAE represent two countries with similar culture (Arab - Middle Eastern) and religion (Islam).
- KSA and UAE represent countries at two different levels of public relations development.

It is worth mentioning that, in the early stage of the present study, the attention was on exploring the impact of the political, social and cultural environment on the practice of public relations in three Arab countries with different political and economic systems. A conservative monarchy in Saudi Arabia, a federal and liberal regime with an open economic system in the United Arab Emirates, and a totalitarian secular regime, with a socialist economic system in the Syrian Arab Republic. The researcher assumed that these three different systems represent three different environments, thus the practice of public relations would be different in each country due to the impact of these surrounding environments.

However, Syria had to be eliminated from the area of research due to the political unrest the country faced, and that is still under way, which makes it impossible to conduct any research on the practice of public relations in Syria at this time, even from a distance using electronic communications.

To shed more light on this topic, how it will affect the results of the study directly, and consequently the conclusions drawn from it; a brief background on the recent situation in Syria is given. Syria is currently experiencing a period of not only political, but also religious/secular and economic turmoil to the extent that international organisations have declared it a civil war. The country is far from stable by any standards, and it would be inappropriate to study or conduct research on the practice of public relations in the country at present. The researcher has tried to look for an alternative to replace Syria in its position as a socialist economic regime, with another country following, more or less, the same regime. The Republican Arab countries of Yemen, Egypt and Libya were identified as appropriate substitutes. However, it is evident also from the recent revolutions in these countries, that they are facing similar problems to those seen in Syria, and hence cannot be used for the purpose of this study.

That being said, the research as it stands with only two country's regimes for comparison (KSA and the UAE) still holds as valid and justified in the conclusions it will draw, as both regimes are very different from one another and it is still interesting and worthwhile to look at how the practice of public relations does indeed vary between the two. In addition to this, the Syria scenario, with its totalitarian secular/socialist economic regime, will still remain on the agenda as a possibility for future research in the eventuality that the current situation stabilises, opening up the opportunity for comparison between it and other countries, and

also the chance for a ‘before and after’ comparison of the practice of public relations, under the previous Syrian regime, and the new, in the case that the people’s revolution triumphs and a brand new regime gains power.

To summarise, the study was limited to only two countries, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. It is true to say that a case study of public relations in the two countries was enough to represent the impact of the political and social-cultural and economic environment, on the public relations profession and its practitioners, but it is also true that the exclusion of Syria made the generalisation of the results more limited and less significant than if Syria remained within the case study. As mentioned, this is because Syria differs very greatly in its political and economic system from the other two countries, and this leads one to think that it might represent a new and different type and experience of public relations practice.

It should be noted also that it was unjustified to choose any other Arab country in an attempt to replace Syria in the study. Firstly because the rest of the Arab countries are not similar in their political system to the models of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and therefore would not represent totalitarian regimes like the one prevailing in Syria. Secondly, other republican Arab countries like Yemen, Libya and Egypt are also witnessing unprecedented political transformations, no less radical than those taking place in Syria.

The present study aims to address the practices of public relations within specific countries or regions. Empirical research shows that contemporary global practitioners and scholars are aware of the impact that a country’s economic and political environments have on the evolution and practices of public relations (Moreno, 2004). According to Molleda and

Moreno (2006), the dynamic global environment represents an opportunity for development of public relations in emerging and transitional democracies and economics.

Moreover, scholars believe that the American model is not necessarily the only possible model of public relations. Golitsinski (2000) adds that nations which did not enjoy freedom of speech and democratic institutions in the past “today are widely adopting public relations as a social institution and developing their own theory base... China, the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, and other countries now have their own public relations organisations”.

#### **1.4. Significance of the study**

From reviewing the literature in both Arabic and English, and from discussions with numerous public relations practitioners throughout the Arab Middle East, it is clear that this investigation is amongst the first to attempt a detailed examination of the standard PR professionalism in the region. The findings will provide evidence for a comprehensive analysis with particular reference to two countries with contrasting political systems: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. It will also contribute to the global study of public relations by providing an Arab perspective on how the profession is developing in a region that is currently undergoing great change.

#### **1.5. Strengths of the study**

The researcher’s background: it matters whether a researcher has special ‘inside’ knowledge and insights or, on the contrary, comes to the study as an ‘outsider’ with no prior knowledge or prejudices about a group (Minichiello, et al., 1995). In the present research, the researcher

has practiced journalism and PR in the Middle East for 20 years. During his work, the researcher became aware of various issues related to the practice of journalism and public relations in the Middle East. Moreover, the researcher is familiar with the culture, the Arabic language, and the political issues in the Middle East. Additionally, the researcher's previous employment as Head of Public Relations with a leading Arab radio and TV organisation based in Saudi Arabia (2008-2010) and Public Relations Manager with a leading airline company based in UAE (2010) provided great opportunities to make this work do-able and achievable.

### **1.6. Limitations of the study**

As with any human activity the present research is not likely to be a complete or perfect piece of work. It will have its own limitations as well as its own strengths. Thus, the findings from this study are subject to some limitations.

1. The study had to eliminate Syria from the area of research because of the political unrest that occurred, and is still under way, in this country. The exclusion of Syria made the generalisation of the results limited and less important than if Syria remained within the case study.
2. The sample of the surveys is relatively small, therefore generalisation is at a minimum.
3. The study is limited by the fact that the email survey method of collecting data has a lower than satisfactory response rate. The length of time it takes to complete the survey may limit the number of respondents who complete it. Moreover, the survey

instrument used may also be completed by a person other than the one for whom it was intended.

4. There is an absence of empirical literature related directly to the practice of public relations in the Middle Eastern Arab countries. Therefore the study employed variables generated from literature and published studies that focused on the USA, the UK, and some Asian countries.
5. Researchers often agree that using convenience sampling has drawbacks, as it “does not produce representative findings” (Robson, 2002, p.141).

### **1.7. Ethical considerations**

Stacks (2002) suggested that conducting ethical public relations research is difficult as there is no guarantee of confidentiality or anonymity. The issue of ethics is complicated and hard to define as it varies according to the research itself, its content, its methodology, its dissemination and the participants themselves. Ethical considerations when conducting a research study with children differ from ethical considerations with adults. In this part, concepts of ethics will be explored. Cavan (1977 cited in Cohen, et al., 2000, p.56) defines ethics as:

*Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth. Ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if, in the extreme case, the respect of human nature leaves one ignorant of human nature.*

Moreover, Alderson (2004) suggests that the rules for ethical research are based on three principles; first, respect and justice concerning sensitive issues by trying to be fair and using resources efficiently; second, recognition and respect for all participants' rights; third, best outcomes ethics means working out how to reduce harms and costs and to promote benefits. Ethical concerns can arise at every stage of the research, as Cohen, et al. (2000, p.49) point out:

*“Ethical issues may stem from the kinds of problems investigated by social scientists and the methods they use to obtain valid and reliable data. In theory at least, this means that each stage in the research sequence may be a potential source of ethical problems.”*

Bryman (2004) points out that care should be taken over confidentiality of participants' records from the beginning of the research to the publishing stage particularly when indicating that responses will be anonymous. It seems that the issue of confidentiality is easier in questionnaires than in interviews as it is very difficult to produce interview transcripts without revealing participants' identities or places. Most ethical concerns start at the beginning of the research; Cohen, et al. (2000) show that ethical considerations will pervade at the stage of access and acceptance, where appropriateness of topic, design, methods and guarantees of confidentiality must be negotiated with relative openness, sensitivity and honesty.

Gorard, et al. (2004, p.172) show that “the welfare of research participants must be protected”. It is believed that permission has to be obtained in all cases and clear explanations of participants' rights to participate or refuse must be shown. Furthermore it is important to



show clearly the aim of the research, the process, its use and its methods. Bryman (2004) adds that some interviewees might refuse to answer what they consider 'private' questions. To overcome this obstacle, privacy and confidentiality were always assured and participants' wishes were respected. Overall, in this research, every precaution has been taken to reduce misleading or misunderstanding. A covering letter explaining the aim of the research and the methods used was sent at the very beginning of the study.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) pointed out the importance of sensitivity to ethical issues in successful qualitative research. They also suggested two general ethical considerations: informed consent and protection of participants' anonymity (p.90). The present research took their ethical principles into consideration. To gain the informed consent of participants, the researcher disclosed the purpose of the present study to all of them. Also the researcher guaranteed their anonymity and confidentiality by not including their names or any identifying characteristics.

## **1.8. Structure of the study**

**Chapter two** of the thesis is devoted to the literature, taking a variety of themes and assembling them in such a way as to form a foundation for a discussion which combines a modern academic approach with one suited to appraise the needs of the region and its communities. These themes include public relations definitions and theories, public relations models, public relations practitioners' roles, excellence theory in public relations, international public relations studies, public relations professionalism and public relations practise in the Arab countries.

**Chapter three** introduces a critical theoretical framework to better understand public relations theory and practice. The chapter includes public relations definitions, public relations models, public relations practitioners' roles, international applications of public relations models and public relations models in practical function.

**Chapter four** is devoted to shedding light on the history of public relations practice in the Arab countries, and describes the current developments in terms of practice, education, and professional bodies.

**Chapter five** explores the relationship between environmental variables outside organisations and the practice of public relations. This chapter also focuses on the socioeconomic and political challenges that are expected to influence the development of public relations in KSA and UAE.

**Chapter six** is an overview of the methodology used in the study. The discussion in this chapter is structured around the research design, population sampling, data collection and data analysis. Also this chapter outlines the methodological approach chosen for the purposes of this research.

**Chapter seven** introduces the practice of public relations in both countries, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The chapter starts with a general introduction and background, before introducing the current public relations situation in each country with some samples to present the practice of the profession.

**Chapter eight** presents the empirical evidence from the research field work. This chapter shows how public relations practitioners conduct their daily activities. It shows the models they are applying and what roles they are playing inside their organisations. This chapter also introduces the findings of the qualitative research conducted with journalists to explore their views on public relations practice and roles.

**Chapter Nine** introduces and evaluates the research findings. The intention of the present study is to examine the socioeconomic and political challenges that are expected to influence the development of public relations in KSA and UAE. The aims of the investigation are to answer three questions. Which models of public relations are practiced in KSA and UAE? Which roles are practiced by public relations practitioners in KSA and UAE? And, what are the socio-cultural, political, and economic factors that determine public relations models and roles practiced in KSA and UAE? Answering these questions reveals the influence of the societal-cultural values on the practice of public relations models and public relations practitioners' roles in these two Arab countries.

**Chapter ten** concludes the major outcomes of the research. This chapter also highlights the present study's implications for the theory of public relations and other disciplines.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter introduces the theoretical background that frames the present research, including public relations models, principles and theories of public relations that are most frequently tested in international research, developed primarily within the socio-political and economic context of the Western capitalist democratic world (Sriramesh and Verčič, 2003; Bardhan, 2003). Studies have typically compared public relations practices in different countries using James Grunig's four models of public relations (Grunig, J., et al., 1995; Sriramesh, et al., 1999; Huang, 2001) or Dozier and Broom's (1995) four hierarchical roles (Culbertson and Chen, 1996a; Wu and Taylor, 2003). These models constitute one approach, among many possibilities, for exploring how public relations is conceptualised, theorised and practised in different countries.

### **2.2. Defining public relations**

Educators and practitioners have often been reported to have varying views about the skills and knowledge essential to effective practice of public relations. Sallot, Cameron and Weaver-Lariscy (1998) found that educators and practitioners disagreed on nearly two-thirds (62%) of the items on a survey designed to measure opinions about professional standards. Several of those differences were on definitional items such as tactical versus strategic emphasis, position in management structure, evaluative issues related to measurement, ethics and more.

Definitions incorporating the concept of organisation-environment interdependency most benefit the purpose of the present research. Crable and Vibbert (1986) described public relations as the “art of adjusting organisations to environments and environments to organisations” (p.413). Broom and Tucker (1989) identified public relations as a management process that aims to attain and maintain accord and positive behaviours among social groupings on which an organisation depends to achieve its mission.

Another definition of public relations asserts that public relations must build and maintain a hospitable environment for an organisation. Simoes (1992) stated that public relations is an activity that administers the political function (or subsystem) of organisations. It deals with “policies, procedures, and activities, which legitimate the decision-power of the organisation regarding its various publics, and their common and specific interests” (p.190). White and Dozier (1992) argue that public relations is “a strategic management function” which “includes managing exchanges across the organisational boundary to ensure that the organisation responds to environmental demands and opportunities” (p.101).

Grunig, J. (1992) defined public relations as “the management of communication between an organisation and its publics” (p.4). He underscored that its major purpose is to facilitate understanding among people and other entities such as organisations' publics or societies, providing them with a way to stay close to their customers, employees, and other strategic constituencies.

In spite of the many definitions, public relations academicians have shared a number of views including:

- “the management of communication between an organisation and its publics (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p.6);
- “the building of relationships and the management of communication between organisations and individuals” (Thomsen, 1997, p.12);
- “the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Cutlip, et al., 2000, p.6); and
- “the distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organisation and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasises the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilise change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.” (Harlow, 1976, p.36).

Many of these definitions acknowledge that public relations should be an organisational management function. They diverge, however, on what purpose public relations should serve to the organisation. These purposes include reputation management (Hutton, et al., 2001), relationship management (Heath, 2001; Ledingham and Bruning, 2000a), message management (IPRA, 1982), conflict resolution (Plowman, Briggs and Huang, 2001), and even marketing communication (Duncan and Caywood, 1996; Hutton, 1996).

### **2.3. Excellence Study and international public relations**

Funded by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation, a team of six researchers (Grunig, J., Grunig, L., Dozier, Ehling, Repper, and White) began their research by addressing the questions: how, why, and to what extent does communication contribute to the achievement of organisational objectives? In addition to the original question of organisational effectiveness, they added what they called the 'excellence question': how must public relations be practiced and the communication function organised for it to contribute most to organisational effectiveness? (Grunig, J. 1992) The study of excellence in public relations and communication management in the USA, the UK and Canada produced an explanation of the value of PR to an organisation and a set of theoretical principles describing how the communication function should be organised, structured and practised in an organisation.

The IABC team first started to develop a theory of value of public relations by reviewing theories of business social responsibility, ethics, and conflict resolution. They asserted that public relations has value to the larger society as well as to specific organisations. To further identify the value of excellent public relations, they examined previous research on excellence in management and searched for the meaning of organisational effectiveness. The IABC team concluded that organisations are effective when they choose and achieve goals that are important to their self-interest as well as to the interests of strategic publics in their environment (Grunig, Grunig and Ehling, 1992, p.86). They argued that, by helping organisations build relationships and by resolving conflicts between the organisation and its strategic publics, public relations departments contribute to organisational effectiveness.

Through a combination of survey research and qualitative research, they identified 14 generic principles of excellent public relations, which they later consolidated into ten.

*1. Public relations is involved in strategic management. An organisation that practices public relations strategically develops programmes to communicate with the strategic publics, both external and internal, that provide the greatest threats to and opportunities for the organisation.*

*2. Public relations is empowered by the dominant coalition or by a direct reporting relationship to senior management. In effective organisations, the senior public relations person is part of or has access to the group of senior managers with greatest power in the organisation.*

*3. The public relations function is an integrated one. Excellent departments integrate all public relations functions into a single department or have mechanisms to coordinate the departments. Only in an integrated system of public relations can public relations develop new communication programmes for changing strategic publics.*

*4. Public relations is a management function separate from other functions.*

*5. The public relations unit is headed by a manager rather than a technician.*

*6. The two-way symmetrical model of public relations is used. Two-way symmetrical public relations is based on research and uses communication to manage conflict and improve understanding with strategic publics. Excellent public relations departments model more of their communication programs on the two-way symmetrical model than on the press agency, public information, or two-way asymmetrical models.*

*7. A symmetrical system of internal communication is used. Excellent organisations have decentralised management structures that give autonomy to employees and allow them to*



*participate in decision making. They also have participative, symmetrical systems of internal communication.*

*8. Knowledge potential for managerial role and symmetrical public relations.*

*9. Diversity is embodied in all roles.*

*10. An organisational context exists for excellence.*

Although the data for the IABC Excellence Project came from three Anglo-Saxon cultures, they contributed to the evolution of a conceptual framework that has immensely helped move theorising about global public relations forward - and begin the process of developing a holistic body of knowledge based on empirical evidence from other cultures and parts of the world. The first element of the conceptual framework that resulted from the Excellence Project was the proposition that there are 10 generic principles of public relations, some or all of which can be adopted by public relations practitioners practicing in most cultures of the world. The second element was the proposition that the 'environment' for public relations varies from region to region based on five key variables - culture (societal and organisational), media environment, the political system, the economic system and level of development, and activism. These variables affect how the generic principles are adopted in a culture.

In a review of normative variables or generic principles, Verčič, Grunig and Grunig (1996) explained the importance of identifying five contextual variables that could influence the practice of the normative principles. The contextual variables identified were the political-economic system, culture, the extent of activism, the level of development, and the media system. Verčič, Grunig and Grunig (1996) studied the political-economic and cultural aspects

of public relations in Slovenia. Taylor (2001) calls this approach 'contextualised research' and provides a summary of representative studies.

Sriramesh and Verčič (2003) explain that "identifying the impact of environmental variables on public relations practice helps increase our ability to predict which strategies and techniques are better suited to a particular organisational environment" (p.1). They further define the contextual variables previously identified by Verčič, et al. and classify them into three factors: a country's infrastructure, societal culture, and media environment. This study focuses on the economic and political aspects of the country's infrastructure described by Sriramesh and Verčič (2000; 2003), which are highly intertwined, knowing that "political ideology is closely linked to economic development because political conditions affect economic decision making and vice versa in every country" (Sriramesh and Verčič, 2003, p.3).

Studies in countries other than the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom have confirmed that the four models of public relations: press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical, can be applied internationally. Lyra (1991) found that although all models of public relations are practiced in Greece, the press agency model dominates. The communication goal of public relations activities in Greece is publicity. Public relations practitioners in Greece lacked the skills to conduct research; therefore, they can't engage in two-way communication with their publics.

In addition to the well-documented country-specific chapters included in the edited book of Sriramesh and Verčič (2003), Coombs, et al. (1994) conducted a comparative research to understand how culture affects public relations in three different countries: Austria, Norway,

and the USA. Other authors have gathered and reported primary data on specific aspects of a country's environment and the implication for the practice and evolution of public relations. Similarly, Braun (2007) documents the influence of the political system on public relations in Bulgaria.

Two studies; Sriramesh (1991; 2004) in India, and Karadjov, et al. (2000) in Bulgaria also revealed that publicity dominates over advanced models of public relations such as two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. In these two countries the two-way models are not practiced because of public relations practitioners' lack of knowledge about ways to conduct research. Sriramesh (1991) also found that in India the organisations' senior management do not support the function of public relations.

Huang's (2000) study in Taiwan discovered that all four models of public relations are practiced, but the use of a model changes after the country's political regime changes. Kim (1996, cited in Rhee, 2002) was one of the first scholars to examine public relations practices in South Korea by employing the four models theory. According to Kim, Korean practitioners aspire to practice the two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models, although they mainly practice media relations.

Rhee (2002) also studied public relations and the effects of culture on public relations in South Korea. Rhee (2002) discovered a similar relationship between political regimes and public relations. In the 1970s, under an authoritarian government, South Korean organisations practiced the press agency model to avoid criticism and negative coverage about the organisations. When the political regime democratised and the first activist and social interest

groups emerged, South Korean organisations started practicing advanced forms of public relations.

Petersone (2002) added a Latvian prospective to the global theory of public relations. She conducted research to identify the ways that political and economic contexts influence the practice of public relations in Latvia. Petersone found that the press agency and public information models dominate in Latvia, and the two-way symmetrical model is the least-practiced model in Latvia. Therefore, the study in Latvia was founded on the proposition that public relations theory can be applied globally.

Molleda and Moreno (2006) explored the transitional socioeconomic and political environments of public relations in Mexico. Molleda (2008) contextualised qualitative research on the pressures of the socioeconomic and political environments on public relations practices in Venezuela. Molleda and Suárez (2005) produced a qualitative assessment of the economic and political environments in Colombia for public relations professionals. Subsequently, Molleda (2008) and Molleda and Moreno (2006) introduced comparative, contextualised research of the implications of the political and socioeconomic environments on the public relations industry of Venezuela, Mexico, and Colombia. Molleda and Moreno (2006) indicate that globalisation's diverse political, socioeconomic, and cultural dimensions form an optimum framework for the development and analysis of public relations. They add that the dynamic global context generates an ideal opportunity to advance international public relations across many parts of the world. Studies show that international public relations have advanced worldwide due to adaptation of democratic principles, increasing global interdependence, and advancement of communication technologies.

Excellence theory is perhaps the most critical and dominant paradigm in the discussion and understanding of public relations theory and practice. Unfortunately, this dominance appears to have been achieved in the face of serious theoretical problems of validity, reliability, efficacy, and ethicality – as well as numerous others. For nearly three decades – or at least since the 1992 publication of ‘Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management’ – excellence theory has been the most dominant and influential paradigm in PR theory. Though J. E. Grunig and Hunt introduced what would be the roots of excellence theory in 1984, the theory has since evolved, and J. E. Grunig and his colleagues have continued to advocate its conceptual and practical superiority.

Although numerous scholars have elaborated on the findings of the seminal excellence study and the subsequent results published by J. E. Grunig (1992), the core principles of excellence theory have remained largely unchanged. Namely, of the four PR models – press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical.

## **2.4. Models of public relations**

Grunig and Hunt (1984) define four models to explain public relations practices of organisations: press agency/publicity; public information; two-way asymmetric; and two-way symmetric. The first two models are one-way, used to give information about the organisation to the public; the next two models are two-way and rely on research. They, therefore, are defined as more “sophisticated” models (Grunig, J., et al., 1995). Grunig and Grunig (1992) argue that the last model is the ideal one for the organisations to be both effective and ethical.

Grunig, J. (1989) identified the two-way symmetrical model as a way of practicing public relations through “us[ing] bargaining, negotiating, and strategies of conflict resolution to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes, and behaviours of both the organisation and its publics” (p.29). It is this two-way symmetrical model, which is characterised as most ethical and effective in practice, which provides a normative theory for achieving excellent communication management. Thus, Grunig, J. regards the two-way symmetrical model as excellent public relations. The significance of the two-way symmetrical model can be found in the following.

First, the two-way symmetrical model makes organisations more effective. From a directional perspective, two-way communication, such as in the two-way symmetrical model, allows for the exchange of information, which flows freely between systems, such as organisations, publics, managements, and employees. From a purposive perspective, symmetrical communication, seeks moving equilibrium through cooperation and mutual adjustment. In contrast, asymmetrical communications leave the organisation as is and try to change the public (Grunig, J. 1992, p.289). It can be generalised that organisations will become much more effective through two-way symmetrical public relations than through one-way communication or asymmetrical positions. Grunig, J. presents several reasons why a two-way symmetrical relationship is best, including; (1) there are no clear boundaries between organisations and other systems due to free flow of information; (2) conflicts will be resolved through negotiation and communication due to thoughts of cooperation and mutual benefits; and (3) the input of all people, including employees, is valued.

Second, the two-way symmetrical model makes organisational public relations more ethical. As Lindeborg (1994) argues, two-way symmetrical public relations “serve as a mechanism by

which organisations and publics interact to manage interdependence and conflict for the benefit of all” (p.9). It implies that everyone involved is equal. Everything can be solved through dialogue, discussion and negotiation. By promoting bonds of mutual trust between the organisation and its publics, and by empowering them to shape and collaborate on organisational goals through feedback, the organisation-public relationship is strengthened (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). On the contrary, the other three models, press agentry/publicity, public information, and two-way asymmetrical, tend to be less ethical. As Grunig and Hunt (1984) proposed, the press agentry/publicity model is dominated by one-way, persuasive communication aimed at manipulating audience attitudes and behaviours, while the public information practitioner provides accurate information about her or his organisation to the public but does not volunteer negative information. These two models established communication as one-directional, from organisation to public. Although the emergence of the two-way asymmetrical model shifted communication from one-way to two-way, which significantly altered communication relationship; the primary goal for feedback under this model is to refine persuasive message strategies toward specific targeted publics in an effort to predict behaviour.

As the four-model typology became an established conceptual and measurement framework for public relations behaviour, many scholars have reacted “either supporting or challenging James Grunig’s models of public relations” (Kent and Taylor, 2002). Many public relations scholars and practitioners argue that the two-way symmetrical communication and excellence theory simply provides a theoretical and unrealistic ideal for practitioners to strive to achieve, rather than reflecting what Grunig, J. (2001) maintains to be a model practiced by excellent public relations departments. Kunczik (1994; 2003) stated that the two-way symmetric model is based on unrealistic assumptions (cited in Sriramesh, et al., 2004). Moloney suggests that a

major problem with Grunig's typology is that it constructs symmetrical public relations as a moral, virtuous and highly ethical practice (1997, pp.13-14). Other public relations scholars have also criticised Grunig and Hunt's emphasis on symmetry (for example, critical scholars such as Motion and Weaver, 2005; Holtzhausen, 2000; Murphy, 2000; Roper, 2005; and cultural studies theorists such as Mickey, 2003). Other challenges include ethics, power, propaganda and Western bias.

Symmetrical communication has been criticised as unrealistic for two reasons. The first reason is that public relations professionals have an allegiance to the organisation, their employers, and must act in the organisation's best interests, which may make it difficult to serve the publics' interests or behave ethically. The second reason is that corporations are believed to be powerful, and in many cases are more powerful than their publics. This raises questions about whether or not it's possible to achieve true symmetry between organisations and publics, and what ethical framework best supports public relations practices.

Critical scholars such as L'Etang and Pieczka (1996), Holtzhausen (2000) and Motion and Weaver (2005) argue that Grunig and Hunt's typology tends to privilege organisational interests, and neglects to address inequalities in power. In addition, the focus on symmetrical models has excluded, until recently, the social and political contexts of public relations. Through the use of a combination of political economy and discourse analysis frameworks, Motion and Weaver (2005) demonstrate the value of studying social and political contexts as well as discursive aspects of public relations.

One of the earliest and most significant critiques of Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four models was proposed by Murphy. Murphy (1991) compared asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical



communication with games theory. Asymmetrical communication resembles the zero sum game - where there is one clear winner and one clear loser; to win means taking something away from the other player. Symmetrical communication represents pure-cooperation games, where the benefits of working together are the purpose of the game. Just as researchers can find very few examples of symmetrical communication, games theorists have not found many - if any - organisations routinely engaged in pure cooperation games.

Murphy used game theory to analyse public relations and public relations models. Game theory, Murphy argued, allows practitioners to understand public relations strategies balanced with the interests of the organisation and the various publics. This approach thus facilitates an understanding of how a compromise is reached between organisations and publics in order to balance both parties' interests in the communications process. Grunig J. (1997) equated the symmetrical model of public relations with games of pure cooperation and asymmetrical communications with the zero sum games in what is effectively a continuum where only in the centre both parties can win. Public relations professionals can choose to adopt a strategy of accommodation, advocacy or a mixture of the two amounting to a mixed motives model.

Compared to Grunig's efforts to identify the models most public relations exercise, Murphy (1991) proposed the *mixed-motive model*, combining elements from the symmetrical and asymmetrical models in order to integrate the needs of the organisation and its publics. She believed that "purely symmetrical public relations behaviour" is impossible because it does not offer rational solutions to real life situations (p.118). Toth (2007, p.87) wrote:

*"In mixed motives, each side in a stakeholder relationship retains a strong sense of its own self-interests, yet each is motivated to cooperate to attain at*

*least some resolution of the conflict. They may be on opposite sides of an issue, but it is in their best interests to cooperate with each other.”*

Murphy's model opens up not one model of communication but an endless series of specific situations to which the mixed-motive model can be used to reach an outcome. The mixed-motive model also recognises that persuasive, asymmetric communication plays a part in the PR process.

Leichty and Springston (1993) acknowledge Grunig and Hunt's (1984) public relations models as the first systematic attempt to explain public relations practices, and they suggest that the four models may be regarded as basic descriptive categories of public relations for different types of organisation-public relationships and different relational stages. But, they criticise the four models under the two main headings of problems related to measurement and conceptualisation. Leichty and Springston (1993) argued that the measurement problems could not be solved with better measurement techniques. They assume first that an organisation differentiates between publics and interacts with them differently according to how that public is perceived by the organisation. In order to solve this problem, public relations style must be measured at the relational level instead of at the organisational level. Leichty and Springston (1993) argued further that these measurement problems could not be solved with better measurement techniques, since the core problem was in the conceptualisation of the models.

Pieczka (1996) and L'Etang (1996) criticised the accuracy of excellence theory, suggesting that it is not based on a positive description of the public relations industry as suggested by Grunig, but instead offers a normative theory of how practitioners should conduct public

relations (Laskin, 2009). Moreover, Pieczka (1996) suggests that the dominant coalition of the organisation and the role of the public relations practitioner contradict the concept of openness, dialogue and inclusion advocated by two-way symmetrical communications. Moreover, instead of highlighting the limitations inherent within Grunig's two-way symmetrical model as it stands, Pieczka critiques the very foundation of Grunig's model by beginning her critique with an in-depth study of sociological and organisational systems theories and their adoption into academic public relations literature. Using alternative critical approaches to public relations theory, Pieczka questions the validity of the whole model on two levels: Grunig's development of two-way symmetry and the research agenda from which it emerged.

Furthermore, in *Paradigms, Systems Theory, and Public Relations* (1996) Pieczka critiques the dominance of systems theory in academic public relation literature. By working through the origins and history of traditional systems and systems theorists, Pieczka criticises Grunig for picking and choosing parts of different system paradigms to fit his model. Furthermore, Pieczka critiqued Grunig's over-idealisation of two-way symmetrical communications.

Three years later, Hutton (1999) challenged the wide acceptance of Grunig and Hunt's four models, arguing that these models do not meet the requirements of a theory, and have failed the test of empirical confirmation. For this reason he introduced a three-dimensional framework with which to compare competing philosophies of public relations, and from which to build a paradigm for the field. These dimensions also explain the substantive differences among various orientations or definitions of public relations. These dimensions are: interest, initiative and image (Hutton, 1999).

- Interest refers to the degree to which public relations is focused on client vs. the public interest.
- Initiative refers to the extent to which the public relations function is reactive vs. proactive. Examples of pro-active techniques include stakeholder surveys, communication audits, crisis planning, issues management and strategic communication planning.
- Image refers to the extent to which an organisation is focused on perception vs. reality, or image vs. substance. This dimension represents the general focus of an organisation's philosophy, thoughts and actions. A publicity stunt may represent one end of the continuum and an anonymous corporate gift to a charity the other extreme.

Dozier and Lauzen (2000) also criticised the symmetrical model because of the power inequality; the organisations "with deep pockets" do not need to engage in communication with activists (p.12). The authors indicated that "the excellence model does not fully address the separate issues of powerless publics and irreconcilable differences" between the powerful organisations and powerless publics (p.12). The resourceful organisations can ignore the publics that lack the resources to conduct excellent public relations. Holtzhausen (2000) went further and "challenged the normative fourth model of two-way symmetry by contending that the notion of symmetry is a myth, and the rhetoric of symmetry allows the more powerful organisation to co-opt the voices of its less powerful public" (cited in Bardhan, 2003, p.227). Duffy (2000) also challenged the possibility of symmetry because power differentials, are an inevitable characteristic of organisational–public relationship building efforts (cited in Bardhan, 2003).

Taylor and Kent (1999) agree with the assumption that powerful publics should be the focus of public relations activities in developing countries. They contended that in these countries the media and government were often more important to organisations than the less powerful publics were (cited in Holtzhausen, et al., 2003). Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) counter-argued that the symmetrical model is not "advocating pure cooperation" or "total accommodation of public interests" (p.309). The symmetrical model integrates both the interests of the organisation and publics. Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) described the essence of symmetry as "values that reflect a moral obligation to balance the interests of an organisation with the interests of publics with which it [the organisation] interacts in society" (p.306).

Taylor (2000) questioned whether the United States' assumptions of symmetry in public relations were relevant in other countries. In this context an empirical study of practitioners in South Africa was conducted by Holtzhausen and Petersen (2003), who found no evidence that respondents grouped public relations practices according to principles of symmetry or asymmetry, thus rejecting the notion of symmetry as a normative public relations approach in international settings. Instead, South African practitioners developed their own culture-specific models of practice based on the economic, social, and political realities of their country. South African practitioners did not conform to the underlying assumptions of models of practice developed in Western countries. Instead, they developed their own culture-specific models of practice; the Western dialogic model, the activist model, the Ubuntu model, and the oral communication model. Holtzhausen and Petersen (2003) proposed the Western dialogic model as one of the viable models of public relations practice in South Africa.

Bardhan (2003) sees those models, as mostly subscribing to a linear and individualistic conceptualisation of the communication process (sender–message–channel–receiver, and feedback) that arose from early Western communication scholarship, therefore there is a need to challenge the assumption that not all communication cultures are universally conceptualised. In her study in India, Bardhan found that public relations professionals filtered public relations concepts for their own use, heavily influenced by Indian values of semi-socialism, bureaucratic norms and Western democratic philosophy. By interviewing Indian public relations professionals, she discovered that they made no assumptions that symmetry was possible between organisations and the public, and suggested that the superiority of this type of communication is based on industrialised, Western professionalisation that may not be applicable across cultures.

Leitch, et al. (2001) and Karlberg (1996) criticised the four models for over-simplification of human and organisational behaviour and failing to take account of publics' multiplicity. Leitch and Neilson (2001) argue that “publics are not fixed categories waiting to be identified but rather are constructed and reconstructed through the discourses in which they participate” (p.138). Karlberg asserts that Grunig's organisational model only allows public relations practitioners to view the public as “primarily consumers and the public sphere [as] primarily a marketplace” (1996, p.266).

Edwards (2006) argues that this narrow approach risks over-simplifying the complicated nature of human behaviour. She suggests that in reality, unofficial organisational hierarchies and internal power struggles are likely to interfere with the function of Grunig's formalised communications process (Edwards, 2006). One of the most recent studies summarising the criticism of the models was done by Laskin (2009). Laskin (2009; 2012) noted that the

models fail to recognise important concepts in public relations scholarship such as the role theory or the relationship-building aspect of public relations. Laskin (2009; 2012) also asserted that the models and dimensions of public relations should be revised to incorporate other variables and make the models more relevant to the daily practice of public relations.

In response to criticism and as a deepening of the theory of excellence, Larissa Grunig, James Grunig, and David Dozier asserted in their most recent book that “we never have defined the symmetrical model as the accommodation of a public’s interest at the expense of the organisation’s self-interest. In fact, the concept of symmetry directly implies a balance of the organisation’s and the public’s interest. Total accommodation of the public’s interest would be as asymmetrical as unbridled advocacy of the organisation’s interests.” (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002, p.314). Instead, they assert that public relations create opportunities for the organisation and its publics to engage in a dialogue. As the facilitator of that discussion, the public relations practitioner’s activities would include making an argument or advocating on behalf of the organisation, as well as listening to the concerns and interests of publics, with openness to the fact that the organisation may be in the wrong. According to the excellence researchers, symmetrical public relations occurs in situations where groups come together to protect and enhance their self-interest. Argumentation, debate, and persuasion take place, but dialogue, listening, understanding, and relationship building also happen because they are more effective in resolving conflict than are one-way attempts at compliance gaining (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002, p.321).

In an effort to develop Grunig’s four models and respond to the scholars’ reactions, Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1995) proposed the *contingency model* that is based on the asymmetrical versus symmetrical dimension. The contingency model includes a continuum with the

organisational position on one end and the public's position on the other end. Both extremes are asymmetrical; if the organisational interests dominate, the interests of the publics are not satisfied and vice versa. In the middle of the continuum the authors proposed the win-win zone where the interests of the publics and the organisation are integrated. Dozier Grunig and Grunig (1995) went further and suggested that negotiation and collaboration make it possible for organisations and publics to find common ground in the win-win zone (pp. 356-357).

Grunig and Grunig (1996), Grunig, J. (2001), and Huang (1997) suggested the need to move beyond the static typology to consider dimensions that underlie the four models. Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2002) argued that the theory of models of public relations should be reconstructed. As a result; they developed a theoretical framework for the models emphasising four dimensions. They compared the competing two-model typology with the four-model typology to see which fit the data best and presented evidence that the four-model typology is a better model than the two-model typology. Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) came up with the new four dimensions: (1) direction (one-way, two-way), (2) purpose (asymmetrical, symmetrical), (3) channel (interpersonal, mediated), and (4) ethics (ethical, unethical). The first dimension represents the extent to which public relations is one-way or two-way. One-way means disseminating information, while two-way means the exchange of information. Huang (1997) included feedback, listening, and research as part of two-way communication. The second dimension consists of symmetry and asymmetry. It refers to the extent to which collaboration and advocacy describe public relations behaviour. The third dimension captures the extent to which public relations practitioners use an interpersonal channel or mediated channel of communication. The last dimension captures the degree to which public relations behaviour is ethical.



More recently - as Grunig and Hunt's four models theory was born last century (about 25 years ago) - many practitioners and scholars may argue its validity in the age of super-high technology and the age of network media (social media). Pavlik (2007) pointed out that technological change presents many significant implications for the structure, culture and management of organisations, particularly from the point of view of public relations. In today's public relations, information speed and globalisation are altering the pace and landscape of the profession and practitioners are facing more difficulties and challenges. Public relations professionals today are confronted with an astounding array of societal changes that will affect their role and function.

De Bussy, et al. (2000) indicate that simple models of communication between an organisation and its publics are either redundant, or at least should be reviewed. The WPP advertising boss Sir Martin Sorrell (2007) summarised this issue by saying that the next few years will be the age of engagement. It is as if one-way communication is not possible anymore and two-way communication is not enough anymore. Janal (2000) and Hurme (2001) have stated that these technological developments have reinforced the relationship aspect of public relations where, on one hand practitioners can engage directly in two-way symmetrical/mixed motive communication with key publics, and on the other hand create wider access for members of the public to have significant input into management's efforts to maintain effective public relations with their various publics.

Pavlik and Dozier (2007) see that the new IT brought another challenge to organisations, as the Web offers a communication tool that can deliver in real-time interactive, individualised messages to any type of public, in contrast, it empowers the individual to create their own communication platforms and along the way it presents significant challenges to

organisations trying to manage the communication function in the age of the information superhighway.

Authors such as Blood (2000) noted that the Internet has made protest against corporations and other dominant organisations easier. But they go on to explain that the Internet has also created a new class of protesters and enable them to cooperate very effectively. With no doubt, social networking sites such as MySpace and video file sharing sites such as YouTube also have enormous implications for public relations as millions of users populate such web sites and spend increasing amounts of time immersed in them, these online environments become increasingly relevant to the communication strategies for organisations (Pavlik 2007).

Andy Green, the author of *Creativity in public relations*, cited by Stephen Waddington (n.d.) asserted that “the four models of public relations and the excellence theory were defined in an era of rigid organisational structures. The Internet has broken down these structures”. Stephen Waddington says “my primary issue with the four models of public relations and the excellence theory is the use of a simple construct that seemingly places an organisation or brand at the centre of every diagram, appearing to control communication and relationships. This is not the case in the era of the social web and I would argue never has been.” Stephen Waddington concludes his paper by asserting that “the era of the social web where the increasing adoption of social media and the shift to integrate social technologies into organisations puts audiences at their heart and calls for a reappraisal for the four models of public relations and the four levels of analysis proposed by the excellence theory.”

In response to the implications of new social media on public relations, Larissa Grunig addressed the issue of “the era of the social media” in her speech at the PRSA International Conference 2010, and said:<sup>1</sup>

*“The new media that we have today makes it more possible than ever to achieve our goals in terms of relationships with stakeholders. So given today's social and business landscape and the advance of digital and social media, what is still important about the excellence theory? I would begin by saying that the theory is not static. Some of the things that we conceptualised years ago are going to change over time because [...] we continue to do research on the theory. People working in the field of public relations continue to investigate and with more data and more analysis, we are able to refine the theory.... With things like globalisation and the crises that we've experienced so visibly in the last few years, and of course digital media, all these factors will undoubtedly influence whatever theory is useful to our field.”*

A chronological summary of some of the different aspects of academic criticism to the four models is outlined here:

1991	Murphy's argument was that the symmetry model abandons the organisation's interest in favour of the public's. Borrowing insight from game theory, Murphy developed the idea of a mixed-motive model. According to this model organisations try to satisfy their own interests while simultaneously trying to help a public satisfy its interests.
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<sup>1</sup> - Available from: <http://www.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/Third-Grunig-Lecture-October-17-2010-Transcript.pdf>. [Accessed 22March 2014]

1993	Leichty and Springston suggest that the four models may be regarded as basic descriptive categories of public relations for different types of organisation-public relationships and different relational stages. They criticise the four models under two main headings as problems related to measurement and conceptualisation.
1996	Pieczka and L'Etang have criticised the accuracy of excellence theory, suggesting that it is not based on a positive description of the public relations industry as suggested by Grunig, but instead offers a normative theory of how practitioners should conduct public relations (Laskin, 2009). <i>In Paradigms, System Theory and Public Relations</i> , Pieczka says that the two-way symmetrical component of the excellence theory is over-idealised. In doing so she criticised the research agenda from which it was developed and the premise of systems theory on which the model is based.
1996	Karlberg, makes the case that the excellence theory is overly concerned with consumers as a primary audience. He believes that the research team missed an opportunity to explore the broader implications of the relationship between an organisation and its markets.
1999	Hutton challenges the wide acceptance of Grunig and Hunt's four models, arguing that these models do not meet the requirements of a theory, and have failed the test of empirical confirmation.
2000	Holtzhausen challenged the normative fourth model of two-way symmetry by contending that the notion of symmetry is a myth.
2000	Dozier and Lauzen criticised the symmetrical model because of the power inequality. The authors indicated that the excellence model does not fully address the separate issues of powerless publics and irreconcilable differences between the powerful organisations and powerless publics.
2000	De Bussy et al., indicate that simple models of communication between an organisation and its publics are either redundant, or at least should be reviewed.
2001	Leitch and Neilson challenge the rigid nature of the excellence theory. Their belief is that publics are not fixed categories waiting to be identified but are formed dynamically through the conversation in which they participate. Leitch and Neilson (2001: 134) suggest the normative public relations focus has been on the surface characteristics rather than on the "underlying structure or goals viewed from within a broader socio cultural context".
2003	Bardhan sees those models, especially the first four, mostly subscribe to a linear and individualistic conceptualisation of the communication process (sender-message-channel-receiver, and feedback) that arose from early Western communication scholarship, therefore there is a need to challenge the assumption that not all communication cultures are universally conceptualised.
2009	Laskin noted that the models fail to recognise important concepts in public relations scholarship such as the role theory or the relationship-building aspect of public relations Laskin asserted that the models and dimensions of public relations should

	be revised to incorporate other variables and make the models more relevant to the daily practice of public relations.
2010	Green asserted that the four models of public relations and the excellence theory were defined in an era of rigid organisational structures. The Internet has broken down these structures and has given rise to informal communication structures. He calls for a reappraisal for the four models of public relations and the four levels of analysis proposed by the excellence theory.
2011	Edwards and Hodges argue that Grunig's rigid focus on organisation theory over simplifies human behaviour. They suggest that this singular focus on public relations within organisations overlooks the social world in which those organisations operate.

In conclusion, and despite the criticisms, the four models of public relations and excellence theory as proposed by Grunig and Hunt in 1984 remains one of the dominant and most critiqued theoretical perspectives in public relations (Laskin, 2009).

## **2.5. Public relations practitioners' roles**

Glen Broom and David Dozier have studied public relations roles for more than 20 years. Since 1978, Broom has fathered the debate about roles in public relations practice, being abstractions of the everyday activities of public relations practitioners (Broom, 1982; Broom and Smith, 1979; Dozier, 1992, p.329). In the same year, Katz and Kahn (1978) introduced roles as a central concept in organisational theory. A role can be seen as "the expected behaviour associated with a social position" (Banton, 1996).

Broom's research was focused on the consultant's roles enacted for senior management by public relations experts. Broom and Smith (1979) conceptualised four dominant roles: the expert prescriber, the communication facilitator, the problem-solving process facilitator and

the communication technician. Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1985; 2000) provided detailed descriptions of each role.

Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1985) found in a survey conducted of members in the Public Relations Society of America that most practitioners see themselves in the expert prescriber role, with communication technician following as the next most commonly reported role. The survey data corresponded with previous findings that indicated practitioners who rated themselves highly in the role of communication technician did not have a tendency to rate highly in regards to the other three roles. However, practitioners who rated themselves highly on any one of the roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, or problem-solving process facilitator, tended to rate highly in terms of all three roles. These findings suggest that public relations roles may be collapsed to the two overarching roles of manager and technician.

Scholars recognise the ability to narrow these four roles down to the two main functions of *manager* and *technician* (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg, 1996; Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Cutlip, Center and Broom, 1985; 2000). The manager acts as a supervisor for the technical staff and uses research findings to serve as a counsellor to management in regards to planning and policy making. The technician role represents the craft side of public relations: writing, editing, taking photos, handling communication production, running special events, and making telephone calls to the media. These activities focus on the implementation of the management's overall communication strategies.

Most public relations practitioners agree that the two roles of manager and technician do exist, however, since public relations work involves a large variety of activities, many

practitioners assume both roles simultaneously. It might then be better to describe the role of the individual practitioner by investigating which role the practitioner takes on the majority of the time. The most important characteristic of public relations and its practitioners, however, is the ability to help the organisation adjust to the environment in which it operates.

The US focus on the traditional public relations 'manager' and 'technician' roles (Dozier, 1984; Dozier and Broom, 1995) is increasingly being criticised as inadequate in the fast-changing external environment. Moreover, the manager/technician role is increasingly seen as over simplified (Leichty and Springston, 1993) as it does not take into consideration the differing work patterns of senior practitioners (Moss and Green, 2001).

Grunig and Grunig (1992) identified three important factors that need to be considered when assessing organisational communications: the culture of the organisation and its power models (Grunig and Grunig, 1992, p.285; Davis, 2004); the potential power of the communications department based on practitioner ability; and the schema of the management as to the role of communications (Dozier, 1992). Moreover, Dozier was criticised for trivialising the role of the technician, not taking into account the role making process factors such as differences in male and female practitioners (Creedon, 1991), how practitioners perform managerial activities (Moss, et al., 2000) and the importance of women's roles within communications (Toth and Grunig, 1993). This area of roles research found that women enact the technician role more often than men do (Broom, 1982; Broom and Dozier, 1986; Cline, et al., 1986; Sha and Dozier, 2011).

Broom and Dozier (1986) established an alternative to the popular glass ceiling theory. Broom and Dozier (1986) concluded the difference in pay and power between men and

women in public relations exists because of the role women play between technician and managerial positions. Women did not aspire to possess managerial roles and were more content in the role of a public relations technician (Broom and Dozier, 1986). According to their study, one can reason that women are content in the tasks they perform in the public relations field and lack interest in the tasks of more managerial roles.

The International Association of Business Communicators Research Foundation commissioned two professional research reports in 1986 and 1989 to assess the impact of feminisation of communication. The first report released, *The Velvet Ghetto* (Cline, et al., 1986) focused on why women were not in managerial roles in public relations. The results of *The Velvet Ghetto* (Cline, et al., 1986) reiterated Broom and Dozier's (1986) study. Women were relegated to the role of technicians; yet, women were relegated to this role, because of the social expectations that women were poor managers (Cline, et al., 1986). *The Velvet Ghetto* (Cline, et al., 1986) contended women self-select themselves into a technician role.

In the second report, *Beyond the Velvet Ghetto* (1989) similar results were repeated from the initial report, but it also gave recommendations for future public relations practitioners; the latter report suggested women accept the reality of the velvet ghetto and adjust to its existence, in order to succeed (Toth and Cline, 1989). Aldoory and Toth (2004) later probed the conclusions of these popular studies through an examination of socialisation and structuralism theories. Aldoory and Toth concluded socialisation skills dictate one's leadership style - a gender differential exists.

Scholars (Leichty and Springston, 1996; DeSanto and Moss, 2004) have questioned the adequacy of the itemised role scales used to measure managerial role enactment in particular.



The criticisms here concern the potential overlap of the manager and technician role and the potential diversity of the practitioner's role taking behaviour. Culberston (1991, p.62) emphasised the need for a more dynamic, process perspective of role enactment rather than treating roles as static categories into which practitioners are *pigeonholed*.

Dozier (1992) described four hierarchical roles that are typically assumed by Western public relations practitioners. Bardhan (2003) reacted to this and considered Broom and Dozier's (1986) four hierarchical roles as attempts at fixing roles, which oversimplify the complexities involved in the various interfaces between organisations and their internal and external publics in different cultural environments. For instance, the relationship between the dominant coalition and public relations personnel is less open in cultures (e.g., India) where the phenomenon of 'power-distance' (Hofstede, 1980) plays a prominent role in determining organisational hierarchies as well as professional relationships (Sriramesh, 1996 cited in Bardhan, 2003).

Petersen, Holtzhausen and Tindall (2002) asserted that it is essential to examine public relations roles in international settings in order to understand how PR is practised in a particular country. Petersen, Holtzhausen, and Tindall (2002) studied public relations practitioner roles in South Africa in an effort to expand roles research to an international scope. The researchers defined public relations roles as actions that are repeatedly performed in order to establish a system of practice. The authors surveyed practitioners in South Africa to determine how they perceived their roles as professional communicators. Statistical analysis of the survey data revealed that all practitioners performed each of the roles, revealing the homogenisation of roles in the field. The role that reportedly accounted for most of the practitioners' time was the role of liaison. The role of media relations emerged as the

second most performed while cultural interpreter and personal influence followed in that order. Contrary to most of the roles research reported in the United States, the four roles in South African public relations could not be divided into managerial and technical functions (Petersen, Holtzhausen and Tindall, 2002).

According to Van Ruler, et al. (2001, p.380), there are identifiable differences in the European approach to PR roles compared with the North American approach introduced by Broom and Dozier (1986). The most profound difference lies in the reflective role of PR, which they consider to be the most important. The practice of reflective PR entails providing information on changing societal standards, expectations and values, adapting organisational norms and values accordingly. The focus here is on socially responsible behaviour by the organisation in order to increase its legitimacy in the eyes of society. The EBOK project team (Van Ruler, et al., 2001) conceptualised four dimensions or roles of European PR, briefly discussed below.

- The reflective role is concerned with organisational standards and values aimed at the decision makers in the organisation. This role is responsible for the analysis of the changing standards and values in society. This is essential for an organisation striving to be socially responsible and to be seen as legitimate.
- The managerial role is mainly concerned with the organisational mission and strategy aimed at commercial and other groups. The development of strategies is aimed at gaining public trust and/or mutual understanding through relations between the organisation and its public groups.

- The operational role is aimed at implementing and evaluating the communication process formulated on behalf of the organisation by preparing a means of communication.
- The educational role is concerned with the behaviour of the members of the organisation and is aimed at internal public groups. This role assists members of the organisation in becoming communicatively competent, in order to respond to social demands.

Moreover, scholars (Creedon, 1991; Toth and Grunig, 1993; Hon, 1995) have argued that the use of the manager-technician typology tends to devalue the important technical work often performed to a greater degree by women (Creedon, 1991). Other scholars (Moss, Warnaby and Newman, 2000) questioned why the roles researchers ignored the extensive body of management literature relating to the topic of managerial work and behaviour in constructing role inventory scales to measure manager role enactment. Moss, et al. questioned why Broom and Dozier's (1986) practitioners' roles failed to consider incorporating some of the more common elements of managerial responsibility/tasks that have been identified by leading management scholars.

In 2002 Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier reevaluated role enactment taking into account three perspectives: participants' self-reported key areas of expertise or knowledge, participants' self-reported most frequent activities, and the dominant coalition's self-reported expectations of public relations managers. From these data, four new role variations were developed: manager, senior advisor, media relations, and internal technician. Looking more closely at the expertise needed to enact roles, the researchers were surprised to find that technician role expertise correlated strongly with many characteristics of excellence. They concluded that

both technical expertise and managerial expertise are necessary for public relations excellence. For example, “media relations is one of the things that top communicators do in their role as managers” (p.235).

This supports earlier findings by Leichty and Springston (1996) who demonstrated that public relations practitioners perform multiple roles simultaneously. Expanding on Broom and Smith’s findings using factor and cluster analysis, they found that most professionals are involved in technical activities while simultaneously engaged in activities more closely aligned with the manager role.

Two distinct types of manager role enactment also emerged from the 2002 Excellence Study: administrative manager and strategic manager. The administrative manager is skilled in developing goals, objectives, and strategies as well as managing budgets and people. The strategic manager is skilled at conducting evaluation research, performing environmental scanning, and using research to segment publics. The knowledge and expertise to enact the strategic manager role would appear to be the nexus between roles and the two-way models of public relations practice, whereas administrative expertise involves the day-to-day operations of a well-run department (regardless of the four public relations models used). Strategic expertise is closely tied to a set of strategic tools a communication department needs to use the two-way models (both symmetrical and asymmetrical) and contribute to the organisation’s strategic planning process. (p.228)

The final list of manager role enactment activities according to the Excellence Study includes the following: provides senior counsel to top decision makers, makes communication policy decisions, is accountable for public relations programme, is responsible for public relations

programme success/failure, is expert at solving public relations problems, keeps others informed of media coverage, creates opportunities for management to hear publics, and represents organisation at events and meetings. In addition to describing the function of public relations in helping an organisation interact with its environment, these role descriptions provide guidance also on the necessary role relationships between public relations professionals and others inside the organisation - particularly management. Most public relations roles research focuses on the relationship between the public relations professional and management as an indicator of the role that public relations ultimately plays within the organisation. These findings create a partial picture of an excellent public relations professional's skill set and regular activities.

Moss (1999) developed Broom and Dozier's (1986) practitioners' roles, by introducing a third role for public relations, namely the *strategist*. A public relations strategist provides the focus and direction for an organisation's communication with its stakeholders and other interest groups in society. Deliberate public relations strategies outline the communication needed to assist in achieving strategic organisational goals, to express organisational positions, to influence organisational managers to become communicating leaders and change agents, to assist them to obtain the loyalty of employees and their support for organisational strategies and positions, and to act socially responsibly.

Steyn (2003) conceptualised and empirically tested the third role for public relations, in the South African context. Steyn (2009) found that the 'public relations strategist' operates at the top management or macro level, performing the mirror function of public relations - scanning and monitoring relevant environmental developments/issues and anticipating their consequences for the organisation's policies and strategies (especially with regard to the

stakeholder and societal environment). A 'public relations manager' operates at the functional/middle management level, partly performing the window function of public relations by developing public relations strategy and a strategic public relations plan that results in messages portraying all facets of the organisation. A 'public relations technician' operates at the implementation level, partly performing the window function of public relations by implementing communication plans through functional activities/tactics.

Furthermore; research by Plowman (2005; 2006) introduced the role of practitioners as *mediators* between organisations and their publics. In order to be effective as a mediator, the public relations consultant must interact with all relevant parties involved. As a mediator the practitioner is no longer a boundary spanner within the management function of the organisation but is rather repositioned as a cultural agent (Curtin and Gaither, 2007). According to Murphy and Dee (1992), public relations practitioners have a responsibility to be the mediator between the organisation and its public. This role also includes disseminating information to the publics and seeking information as well. This information or feedback often provides the public relations practitioner and the organisation with insight as to how the public perceive the organisation. Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg (2000) are of the opinion that the public relations practitioner can be viewed as an intermediary between the organisation being represented and all the publics of that particular organisation.

Banks (2000) maintains that public relations has a mediating and translating role in the communication activities of a society. In fact, when communicating, organisations need to examine their publics through stakeholders' attitudes, investigation and market research and then adapt their identities and shape their messages according to their multicultural external publics' expectations. From this standpoint, public relations practitioners (PRPs) could be

defined as ‘cultural intermediaries’ (Hodges, 2006). In this context public relations can be seen as a cultural practise and communicates across cultural borders (L’Etang, 2011), demanding practitioners apply intercultural communication to publics of different cultural backgrounds, by understanding how culture influences public relations activity (Banks, 2000). Practitioners are ‘culture-workers’ as their work involves ‘multiple overlapping cultures’ beyond national or ethnic cultures and including organisational and other cultural contexts (L’Etang, 2011, p. 19). The practitioner role, then, is that of ‘cultural agent’ (Schoenberger-Orgad, 2009, p.7), a role which demands sound knowledge of “the cultural attributes of his/her publics”; the development of “messages which resonate with all publics” (Schoenberger-Orgad, 2009, p.8); “knowledge of world affairs” and reflexivity, as they need to see “the world around them on terms other than their own” (Curtin and Gaither, 2007, p.262). Practitioners are also cultural intermediaries in that they actively create and recreate culture and shape meanings (Hodges, 2006; Curtin and Gaither, 2007; Daymon and Surma, 2009). Therefore, studies which “emphasise the perspectives and experiences of public relations practitioners in their role as social agents within the culture they study” (Hodges, 2006, p.83) offer alternative understandings of public relations and its role in society.

## **2.6. Public relations and the organisation’s external environment**

When Grunig, J. (1992) defined public relations as “the management of communication between an organisation and its publics” (p.4), he underscored that public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its publics. It involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to be informed about and responsive to public opinion; and defines and emphasises the responsibility of management to

serve the public interest. Further, effective public relations personnel help management to keep abreast of and effectively utilise change, serve as an early warning system to help anticipate trends and use research and sound and ethical communication techniques as their principle tools (Harlow, 1976). Broom, et al. (2000) summarised the definition of an organisation-public relationship as follows:

*“Organisation-public relationships are represented by the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between an organisation and its publics. These relationships have properties that are distinct from the identities, attributes, and perceptions of the individuals and social collectives in the relationships. Though dynamic in nature, organisation-public relationships can be described at a single point in time and tracked over time”.*  
(p.18)

Grunig, J. (1992) maintained that,

*“to produce goodwill, a good image, or a favourable climate of public opinion, and to develop programs for a general public or a mass audience, public relations must develop relations with stakeholders in the internal or external environment that are able to constrain or enhance the ability of an organisation to accomplish its mission”.*

In the IABC Excellence Study, organisations are viewed as organic structures that are located in their environments. Therefore, environmental factors will affect organisational processes as well as the public relations practices of an organisation.



For example, societal culture will affect organisational culture, and organisational culture will determine strategic choices of specific public relations models (Culbertson and Chen, 1996). Culbertson and Chen (1996) have also argued that nations' political systems and culture do shape their practice of public relations. Related factors include social stratification, the nature of personal relationships, media credibility, economic development, and stage of nation building, emphasis on personal loyalty and harmony, and presence or absence of elites created in part by colonial rulers.

Other scholars went further by using systems theory and conceptualised and studied organisations as if they were living organisms (Bowen, 2000; Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2000; Grunig, J. 1992; Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Long and Hazleton, 1987). Katz and Kahn (1967) suggested the "systems theory" approach as it is "concerned with problems of relationships, of structure, and of interdependence rather than with the constant attributes of objects" (p.18). Systems theory also suggests that the external environment exerts pressure on a system or company to change (Cutlip, et al., 1985; Grunig and Grunig, 1989). Public relations departments thus serve another role important to systems theory by enabling a company to be 'open'. An open system or company is one that interacts with the external environment by exchanging information, gauging environmental changes suggested by the information, and continually reacting to those changes (Almaney, 1974; Cutlip, et al., 1985; Naumann and Lincoln, 1989).

Systems theory promotes an understanding of how interrelated corporate subsystems constitute a whole system or company that is operating in a changing environment (e.g., Broom and Dozier, 1990; Cutlip, et al., 1985). The distinguishing characteristic of a system, according to Almaney (1974), is the structure and pattern of interaction (or communication)

between a system's subunits and the resultant interdependence among them. Almaney (1974) considers a system ultimately a "communication network" (p.37). Thus, public relations, as the subsystem responsible for communication in a system, is tasked with ensuring communication between a system and the external environment occurs (Broom and Dozier, 1990). Without communications and subsequent changes according to environmental pressures, systems become insensitive, dysfunctional, unproductive, and inert (Broom and Dozier, 1990).

Therefore, the environment is eminently strategic for the organisations, and the public relations function is dedicated to build and maintain a hospitable environment. For Grunig, J. (1992) the main purpose of public relations is to provide a way by which "organisations and competing groups in a pluralistic system interact to manage conflict for the benefit of all" (p.9). Simoes (1992) stated that public relations is an activity that administers the political function (or subsystem) of organisations. It deals with "policies, procedures, and activities, which legitimate the decision-power of the organisation regarding its various publics, and their common and specific interests" (p.190).

Simoes (1992) emphasised that the role of the public relations officer is much more that of an administrator than that of a communicator. He adds that public relations is performed in many ways: first, by means of analysing tendencies concerning the "organisation's behaviour against public expectations and interest"; second, by means of predicting consequences of the "clash between the organisations' actions and the publics' expectancies in the realm of conjunctural evolution"; third, by means of advising the "organisations' leaders, warning them about the occurrence of possible conflicts and their causes, and presenting suggestions of policies and procedures that avoid the conflict with the public." Finally, public relations is

performed by means of “implementation of planned programmes of information focusing on the various publics” (p.189).

Other scholars suggest that public relations has increasingly become a tool in shaping public policy and playing an active role in shaping society, and ultimately culture (Banks, 1995). Banks argues that public relations is cultural because it reinforces existing, or shapes new, beliefs held about public communication, such as the value attached to gaining support through persuasion as opposed to coercion. Taylor (2000) agrees and considers public relations expertise in relationship building and, consequently, its influence in establishing democracy.

Hazelton and Long (1988) argued that public relations could be described as a process comprising, (1) input from the environment to the system, (2) transformation of inputs into communication goals, objectives, and campaigns, and (3) output, in the form of messages, to target publics. The reactions of the targeted publics to these messages stimulate or provide further input to the public relations process. This may affect organisational maintenance or adaptation functions or precipitate organisational attempts to alter the environment.

## **2.7. The relationship between PRPs and journalists**

The relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists has been investigated and questioned many times since the very beginning of both professions. Sometimes it is described as a love-hate relationship, at other times it is seen as a mixture of dependence and mistrust. For years, journalists have claimed that PR practitioners are unethical, manipulative,

one-sided, and deceptive. They have also complained that public relations practitioners serve special interests rather than the public.

Studies of the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners have shown that journalists relegate practitioners to a lower status not only because of perceived poorer job performance and lower ethical conduct, but also because they perceive practitioners to have less honourable intentions (Stegall and Sanders, 1986). Baskin and Aronoff (1998) say that journalists have mostly negative attitudes towards public relations professionals. In the research they cite, a majority of journalists considered the status of journalism to be superior to the status of public relations.

Research studies suggest that the two most significant factors that journalists dislike about the practice of public relations are the volume of information distributed to media outlets and the restrictions on access to people and information. Some researchers argue that the problems between journalists and public relations practitioners are technology-based and have more to do with writing than anything else. Marken (1994) explains this point by reporting that “nearly every editor and reporter complains that the writing quality of the PR materials has deteriorated to a dangerous level, with many releases lacking clarity, brevity and directness”.

On the other hand, public relations practitioners were found to be less negative about journalists. In support, Kopenhaver, et al. (1984) and Stegall and Sanders (1986) found that public relations officials were quite capable of assessing the opinions of journalists. They had a positive view of journalists and were eager to work with them (Cutlip, et al., 1971). However, Cutlip, et al. (1971) concluded that public relations practitioners were not happy

with the tendency of the press to seek negative and sensational information, and they felt the press did not pay sufficient attention to what they viewed as constructive information.

Nevertheless, both journalists and public relations officers find themselves mutually dependent on one another, a situation which demands cooperation, while their divergent control interests cause distrust and opposition. The research conducted by Shin and Cameron (2005) established that public relations professionals have a tendency towards cooperation, whereas journalists are more directed towards conflict. Therefore any framework used to understand the relationship between journalists and public relations officers must be able to integrate the dimensions of both cooperation and conflict. The importance of the media to organisations, and to their public relations departments cannot be ignored.

Argenti (2007) says that one of the most critical areas within any corporate communication function is the media relations department. Grabowski (1992) went further when he considered the media relations as the core of the public relations profession, adding that a “successful public relations campaign cannot be waged without successful media relations, as media coverage can have significant positive or negative impact on every aspect of an organisation’s operations”. Argenti (2007) says that “the media is both a constituency and a disseminator of information and its role has gained increasing importance over the years.” Baskin, Aronoff and Lattimore (1997, p.197) agree, and state that “the mass media put people in touch with the world beyond their immediate experience and shape people’s perceptions and beliefs particularly in relation to events and topics with which people have little direct contact”.

Similarly, Grunig and Hunt (1984, p.223) state that “relations with the news media are so central to the practice of public relations that many practitioners, especially those guided by the press agency and public information models of public relations, believe that public relations is nothing more than media relations”. In line with Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) view, Argenti (2003) says that although the old-style public relations function which focused almost exclusively on media relations may be a thing of the past, the sub-function referred to as media relations today is still central to the corporate communication effort.

According to Argenti (2003, p.101), “the media is both a constituency and a conduit through which investors, suppliers, retailers and consumers receive information about and develop images of a company”. The author adds that the media’s role as disseminator of information to an organisation’s key constituencies has gained increasing importance over the years. Given this crucial role, Argenti says that almost every organisation has a media relations department, either manned by a part-time consultant or a large team of professionals.

To build better relationships with members of the media, Argenti (2007) suggests that organisations must take the time to cultivate relationships with the right people in the media. This usually means meeting with reporters just to build goodwill and credibility. When practitioners build relationships of confidence and trust with journalists and other media practitioners, many mutually beneficial interactions can result. According to Baskin, et al. (1997) academics and practitioners agreed that healthy media relations depend mainly on developing and maintaining positive relationships with the media, providing reporters with newsworthy information and story ideas, and answering journalists' questions with accurate information in a timely manner.

In this regard, academics and practitioners understood that public relations practitioners must understand how the media function and how reporters work. Baskin, et al. (1997) state that “insights into journalists’ views of public relations and work habits of journalists and other media practitioners are essential”. Battenberg (2002) proposed to public relations practitioners a number of different relationship-building tactics to improve the relationships with journalists. Openness, preparation, and the accurate use of facts are among the keys Battenberg (2002) proposed to build healthy relationships with the media. Sriramesh (2004) also stated that most public relations practitioners spend a significant portion of their time on media relations because of the media’s ability to generate mass publicity. In addition to benefiting from this, Sriramesh stated that practitioners also serve the media by providing them with information subsidies, thus creating a symbiotic relationship.

## **2.8. Public relations in the Arab Middle Eastern countries**

The survey of the literature did reveal that many scholars handled the topic of public relations in the Arab countries from different perspectives including the fields of management, social organisation, business administration and mass communication. (Al-Enad, 1990 ; Kirat, 2005 ; Badran, Turk and Walters, 2003; Alanazi, 1996; Creedon, et al.,1995). Indeed, their research manipulation is exemplified in the production of some textbooks but not fieldwork studies. For example, the scholarly works of Emam (1968), Ali (1976), Hussein (1982), Agwa (1983), and Agwa (2000) typify the different topics of public relations that are introduced to the academic reader. Generally, these works gave account of the basic concepts of public relations and described its utilisation in formal and informal institutions. Furthermore, the above authors emphasised the traditional functions of public relations.

Notably, Hussein (1975) conducted a fieldwork study focusing on the management of public relations in Egypt.

Nevertheless; a study of public relations practiced in Saudi organisations, Al-Hazmi (1990), found strong agreement among the public relations personnel that a professional public relations unit should be part of every government ministry. Al-Hazmi concluded that the definition of public relations is vague and depends on several factors. The size of its budget determines the nature of operations. Education contributes to the importance of public relations, and the top management of an agency decides what role public relations can play (Al-Hazmi, 1990; Alanzi, 1996).

Creedon, et al. (1995) surveyed 65 private, cooperative and governmental organisations in UAE concerning their public relations perceptions and practices. According to another study (Badran 1994) there is clear evidence that confusion exists about the definition, as well as the value, of communication and public relations - at least when viewed from a Western perspective. Secondly, private organisations, which are likely to be foreign-owned, were the most likely to have practitioners or top managers who understood modern public relations. Although government agencies and co-operative organisations exposed the Western concept of modern public relations, they did not put it into practice. Overall, the study found that in the UAE public relations is vague, superficial and widely misunderstood. (Badran, et al., 1994).

The Holmes Report's annual Influence 100 list (2013) reveals that the world's 100 most important in-house communicators collectively control budgets in excess of \$6.5bn. 48 of the Influence 100 are based in North America (compared to 50 in the previous year), with a



further 13 located in the UK. The remainder are spread across 23 countries around the world, including Australia, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Saudi Arabia and UAE as well as all of the major markets in Western Europe. Moreover, while the global public relations industry grew by around eight percent in 2012, figures show that the number of firms located in the Middle East and Africa are growing by 10.4 percent and corporate communications is a big driver of growth in that region.

## **2.9. Conclusion**

The first section of the present research consists of the relevant literature in public relations which addresses the four public relations model (Grunig's model) and the international model as a framework for understanding international public relations practice. Furthermore, the literature review includes a discussion of the PRPs' theory that has a great impact on international public relations practice. Finally, the literature review covers public relations practice and profession in the Middle Eastern Arab countries.

It is worth mentioning here that the literature review conducted by the present researcher found that the Arabic literature on public relations is suffering from a number of problems: 1) a lack of literature in the Arabic language, if any is found, it is no more than journalistic articles, papers published in academic journals, or unpublished academic theses; 2) most of the public relations literature written in Arabic has poor and/or outdated theoretical content, rather than up-to-date empirical research; 3) most of the public relations literature written in the Arabic language has content which is copied and/or poorly translated from Western textbooks. Moreover, there are no textbooks, and few credited articles, published in English on the subject of public relations in the Middle Eastern Arab countries.

## **CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL ROOTS AND SURVEY OF MODELS**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter aims to discuss the main conceptual roots of this study. First, by exploring the models of public relations, the Western models and the international models, to describe the different approaches to the practice of public relations. Second, by exploring the public relations practitioners' roles theory and how it relates to the models of public relations. Before that, the opening of this chapter focuses on defining the term 'public relations'.

### **3.2. Defining public relations**

Public relations is a relatively new field of scholarship and practice. Educators and practitioners have often been reported to have varying views about the skills and knowledge essential for effective practice of public relations. Hutton (1999, pp.199-200) is of the opinion that the field has suffered from an identity crisis, largely of the field's own making:

*"In both theory and practice, PR has failed to arrive at a broadly accepted definition of itself in terms of its fundamental purpose, its dominant metaphor, its scope, or its underlying dimensions".*

Cameron, et al. (1996) found that educators and practitioners disagreed on nearly two-thirds (62%) of the items on a survey designed to measure opinions about professional standards. Several of those differences were on definitional items such as tactical versus strategic

emphasis, place in management structure, evaluative issues related to measurement, ethics and more.

Hence, the definition of public relations continues to evolve. There have been formal attempts to define the practice, including a 1970s effort that crafted an 88-word sentence to define public relations (Harlow, 1976). In 1976 and 1977, Harlow produced a chronology of public relations definition, a synthesis of 472 definitions and the input of 65 PR practitioners to retrieve the following definition:

*“Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasises the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilise change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.” (p.36)*

About five years later, a task force of the Public Relations Society of America came up with two shorter definitions: “public relations helps an organisation and its publics adapt mutually to each other” and “public relations is an organisation’s efforts to win the cooperation of groups of people,” according to Seitel (2004, p.6).

Some of the reviewed textbooks define public relations as “the planned process to influence public opinion, through sound character and proper performance, based on mutually satisfactory two-way communication” (Seitel, 2004, p.3). The Mexican statement definition (cited in Jefkins, 1994) was adopted at the first World Congress of National Public Relations Associations, held in Mexico in 1978. It defined public relations as:

*“The art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisational leaders as well as planning and implementing a programme of action that will serve the interest of not only the organisation but also that of its publics”*

In contrast, one of the most widely taught definitions, especially in the United States, is that of Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006, p.5):

*“Public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.”*

Similarly, Baskin, Aronoff, and Lattimore (1997, p.5) provide a lengthy working definition defining PR as a management function:

*“Public relations is a management function that helps achieve organisational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organisational change. Public relations practitioners communicate with all relevant internal and external publics to develop positive relationships and to create consistency between*

*organisational goals and societal expectations. Public relations practitioners develop, execute, and evaluate organisational programs that promote the exchange of influence and understanding among an organisation's constituent parts and publics.”*

Public relations organisations such as the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) have set out to classify the public relations profession through definitions of duties and codes of conduct. The PRSA defines public relations as the following: “public relations help an organisation and its publics adapt mutually to each other,” and:

*“Public relations help our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies into harmony. Public relations serves a wide variety of institutions in society... To achieve their goals, these institutions must develop effective relationships with many different audiences or publics such as employees, members, customers, local communities, shareholders, and other institutions, and with society at large.” (PRSA, 2004)*

According to Lages and Simkin (2003), these definitions imply that the focus of public relations is the management of an organisation’s relationships with its publics through the four-step management process of analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation. They add that in this context, public relations uses communication strategically. The use of

‘organisation’ implies the same meaning as the PRSA definition that the practitioner can be “any corporate or voluntary body, large or small” (IPR, 2004).

In 1984 Grunig and Hunt offered the broadest definition of public relations when they wrote: "public relations is the management of communication between an organisation and its publics" (Grunig and Grunig, 1990). This definition captures several key components of effective public relations. Firstly, it establishes that public relations is managed or planned communication. Secondly, public relations represents an organisation, or client, and it should always be used to address the client’s problems or opportunities. Thirdly, public relations needs to be targeted to specific ‘publics’. Grunig, J. (1992) underscored that public relations’ major purpose is to facilitate understanding among people and other entities such as organisations publics, or societies, providing them a way to stay close to their customers, employees, and other strategic constituencies.

Simon (1980) outlines six elements of the field. They are: (1) management function, (2) relationships between an organisation and its publics, (3) analysis and evaluation through research, (4) management counselling, (5) implementation and execution of planned programmes of action, communication, and evaluation through research, and (6) achievement of goodwill.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) suggested that most definers of public relations "describe: (1) the kinds of things public relations practitioners do, (2) what effect they think public relations should have, and (3) how they believe public relations should be practiced responsibly”.

The good of this definitional pluralism is that it provides public relations researchers the freedom to choose the definition that best fits the purpose and framework of a given study. The present study is using the definition of public relations put forth by Long and Hazleton (1987) and Hazleton and Long (1988), a definition endorsed by Wilcox, et al. (2003) and defining public relations as “a communication function of management through which organisations adapt, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organisational goals” (Long and Hazleton, 1987, p.6).

### **3.3. Models of public relations**

Public relations researchers (Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Murphy, 1991; Grunig and Grunig, 1992; Creedon, 1993) have been exploring different approaches to PR, to explain the value of public relations in organisations and describe how the communication function is organised and practiced most effectively in a corporate setting.

#### **3.3.1. Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) four models**

One of the most important stages in the development of the theory of public relations is when Grunig and Hunt (1984) first identified the four models of communication between organisations and their stakeholders/publics. These models are the press agency and public information models, both based on the one-way dissemination of information, the two-way asymmetrical model, which focuses on organisational efforts to change publics, and the two-way symmetrical model of public relations, which focuses on a balanced relationship between an organisation and its public (p.22).

**a. Press agency/publicity model**

Press agency or publicity was the earliest PR model to appear. It is the “systematic effort to attract or divert public attention”, and was used in the nineteenth century to promote such American national heroes as Daniel Boone, Buffalo Bill, Davy Crockett, and Calamity Jane. The figure who best expressed the press agents of that time was Phineas T. Barnum, whom Grunig and Hunt classify as “the great showman who formed the Barnum and Bailey Circus” (p.28).

The press agency model emerged in the late 19th century and was characterised as one-way, source-to-receiver communication where practitioners’ work is focused on publicity and propaganda. Grunig, J. (2002) proposed that those practitioners “seek attention for their organisation in almost any way possible” (p.308). Practitioners of this model communicate the organisation’s goals to the target audience through the use of incomplete, distorted and/or half true information (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p.21).

In General, Grunig, J. (1992) noticed that the press agency model applies when a communication programme strives for favourable publicity, especially in the mass media, in almost any way possible. The practitioners of this model see the mass media as a means for achieving their own ends and to control or dominate the environment, do no research aside from monitoring the media in which they sought to place favourable articles about their clients, and pay little attention to the truth or credibility of the news.



## **b. Public information model**

By the early 1920s the press agency model lost credibility with journalists, largely because they had been deceived by press agents too many times. Ivy Lee, a former journalist turned public relations practitioner, recognised this problem and sought to address it by sending his Declaration of Principles to journalists. The Declaration of Principles was looked at as the birth certificate of the public information model. This model was created to disseminate objective information to the public (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p.21).

Grunig, J. (2002) suggested that another form of public relations developed at the beginning of the twentieth century, when government officers and big-industry institutions decided to hire “their own journalists as public relations practitioners to write press ‘handouts’ explaining their actions.” For Grunig, J. (1984; 2001) and Grunig, J. and Grunig, L. (1989; 1992) the public information model uses journalists in-house to disseminate relatively objective information through the mass media and controlled media such as newsletters, brochures, and direct mail, but not to volunteer negative information. Public relations’ practitioners operating in this model conduct some research, but it is generally limited to readability analyses and readership studies. This model of public relations resulted in a one-way, top-down approach to communication where an agency creates a message and sends it out to the public, wanting or seeking no feedback. This model is similar to the press agency model in its lack of concern for audience responses and research on its communication activities. The main role of communication in this model is to disseminate information.

### **c. Two-way asymmetric model**

As the public information model failed to take into account feedback and the response of the public, the new two-way asymmetric model began to emerge in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The two-way asymmetric model relies on two-way communication: from source to receiver and back to source. Grunig and Hunt (1984) used the term 'asymmetric' to describe the effects of the communication. By this they mean that the client is seeking to change the beliefs or behaviour of the target public, but is not willing to change its own beliefs or behaviours.

The two-way asymmetric model of public relations relies heavily on research about the target publics; such research is frequently conducted through attitude surveys and focus groups. Although the asymmetric model is effective in serving the public interest, the model is primarily used to retain the group's position in society. Also, the model is used to advocate the public's view inside the organisation, informing the management of what the public will accept.

Unlike one-way models, the two-way asymmetric model uses developed scientific concepts to elaborate "messages that are most likely to persuade strategic publics to behave as the organisation wants, without having to change the behaviour of the organisation" (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002). However, the model does not allow the practitioners to tell the organisation how to change to please the public. (Grunig and Hunt, 1984)

#### **d. Two-way symmetric model**

The two-way symmetrical model was introduced in the 1960s to make up for the asymmetric model's inability to create change within the organisation (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). Grunig and Hunt (1984) proposed that "the two-way symmetrical model is used by organisations that practice excellent public relations" arguing that this form of public relations does the most to make organisations effective and excellent. The communication in this model is two-way, and the effects are balanced; both the organisation and its publics need to find ways of changing to accommodate one another.

This model places greater emphasis on the use of dialogue and negotiation between organisations and their publics. With this model, while the organisation may be able to change the public's attitudes or behaviour, the public may also be able to persuade the organisation to change its attitudes, behaviour or message. The goal of this model is to seek a balanced purpose, promoting mutual understanding and managing conflict between the organisation and its publics by changing both entities. Moreover, this model requires far more research to understand the issues that are creating contention and the publics that are affected by these issues. Organisations use research tools such as focus groups, surveys, and public opinion polling to provide the vital feedback loop from publics.

#### **3.3.2. International models of public relations**

After extensive studies of public relations in the countries with Anglo cultures, Grunig, J., et al. (1995) made two primary conclusions. First, the findings of the research can be applied to other countries. Second, most of the conditions that foster public relations in Anglo countries

may not exist in other cultures. Because Grungs' models have been useful in describing, understanding and identifying public relations practice in Anglo countries, Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) proposed a need for a global theory of public relations that describes public relations around the world in "different settings" (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002). Hence; there has been extended research conducted all over the world to explore and investigate the effectiveness of these models. Sriramesh (1991) discovered the *personal influence model* in India and Lyra (1991) discovered that multinational companies in Greece use the *cultural interpreter model* to explain the local culture to the management of multinational organisations.

Sriramesh's personal influence model and Lyra's cultural interpreter model are based on international research projects. These international models of public relations describe practitioners cultivating good relationships with external publics to restrict government regulation, secure government approval, and ensure positive press coverage. Personal influence is not limited solely to Indian public relations but instead it may be a "pervasive public relations technique" in other cultures and nations, and the cultural interpreter model "seems to exist in organisations that do business in another country, where it needs someone who understands the language, culture, customs, and political system of the host country". These two new models reflect a more relationship-oriented approach to public relations.

#### **a. Personal influence model**

Sriramesh (1992) introduced the *personal influence model*, known as the fifth model of public relations. This model has been shown to be prevalent in Far Eastern countries (Sriramesh, 1992). Practitioners who use the personal influence model establish personal

relationships with key individuals in the media, government, or political and activist groups. In this model, interpersonal communication is argued to play a large persuasive role in attitude. According to Sriramesh (1992), in many nations in the developing world, organisations tend to ignore the attitudes of mass publics and instead focus specifically on the attitudes of journalists and government officials. Thus, personal influence is a pervasive public relations technique (Sriramesh, 2006). The personal influence model suggests that practitioners of the personal influence model employ their personal contacts with the key players in the media and politics to get attention for their organisation (Grunig, J., et al., 1995).

#### **b. Cultural interpreter model**

Lyra (1991) discovered that multinational companies in Greece use the *cultural interpreter model* to explain the local culture to the management of multinational organisations. The cultural interpreter model is used by multinational firms with little experience in the country in which they are operating. These organisations need people who understand the language, culture, customs and political and economic environment of the country. Therefore, cultural interpreting as a component of the symmetrical model can be used to facilitate the understanding between the organisation and its diverse publics. Moreover, the practitioners of the two-way asymmetrical model may employ cultural interpretation to learn what is acceptable to the publics and then design the organisation's message to appeal to these expectations. Grunig, J., et al. (1995) found that the cultural interpreter model is just a component of other models. Authors (Grunig, J., et al., 1995) described the ways cultural interpretation may be used to reach the goals of both the two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical models.

### 3.4. Public relations practitioners' roles

The history of research on role enactment by public relations practitioners is well-described. Scholarly research stretches back into the 1970s, to the seminal work of G. M. Broom and G. D. Smith. The scholarship of G. M Broom - described as the father of roles research (Dozier, et al., 1995) - and Dozier is particularly important to how the conceptualisation of the roles practitioners play has evolved in the nearly three decades of research.

The roles public relations practitioners (PRP) play vary in terms of organisations, individuals and the attitude of the society. According to Steyn (2000) the concept of role refers to the standardised patterns of behaviour required of individuals in specific functional relationships; through roles organisations express expectations. Practitioner roles are essential to understanding the function of public relations. roles define the everyday activities of practitioners. Research on PR roles therefore studies individual practitioners and their work activities (Steyn, 2000, p.14).

The early stage of public relations roles research began when Broom and Smith (1979) defined four role models describing the activity patterns of public relations professionals. They conceptualised a four-role typology of public relations practitioners:

- (1) *expert prescriber*,
- (2) *communication facilitator*,
- (3) *problem-solving process facilitator*,
- (4) *communication technician*.

Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1985; 2000) provided detailed descriptions of each role. The expert prescriber is seen as an authority on all public relations matters. The practitioner in this role distinguishes the problem, develops a relevant communications programme, and takes responsibility for implementation of the programme. The communication facilitator, both a sensitive listener and information broker, focuses on the use of two-way communication in order to act as a liaison, interpreter, and mediator between the organisation and its key publics. The problem-solving process facilitator is a member of the management team who works with other organisational managers in an attempt to identify and rectify problems. Using the same step-by-step progression that is used to diagnose and solve other organisational quandaries, this practitioner attempts to solve public relations problems. The problem-solving practitioner works especially closely with line managers to enact a public relations problem-solving process. The role of communication technician is often an entry-level position that is not managerial and sometimes does not receive information as to the motivation for communication tactics or the intended results. The technician primarily writes newsletters, news releases, and feature stories.

In Dozier's view, as a communication manager a PR practitioner must participate in the governance of organisations. Participation can involve a role of facilitating processes whereby the *dominant coalition* (including PR management) makes decisions about PR issues. Participation can take the form of a communication liaison role, i.e. the practitioner creates opportunities for management and key publics to communicate with each other. Participation can also take the form of expert prescription, where the practitioner makes policy decisions about the organisation's PR programmes and is held accountable for their implementation (Dozier and Broom, 1995). The communication technicians are often highly skilled individuals who carry out communication programmes and activities such as writing

news releases, editing internal newsletters, etc. They will not be involved in organisational decision-making because implementation is their focus. A key difference in these two roles is that the manager is likely to be in the organisation's management body and will participate in the decision-making process, whereas the technician will not be part of this *dominant coalition* and will implement decisions made by others.

In a study aimed at comparing the roles of male and female practitioners, Broom (1982) found that all practitioners surveyed assumed the roles of expert prescriber, communication technician, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator at different times. Both men and women indicated that they most often played the role of expert prescriber, but the other roles varied in frequency between genders. Women reported that they most often played the roles of communication technician, problem-solving process facilitator, and communication facilitator in that order while men were problem-solving process facilitators second, then communication facilitators and communication technicians. In the same study (Broom, 1982), respondents that reported high levels of communication technician functions, reported low performance levels of functions that characterise the other three roles. Findings indicated that the roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator tended to be played by the same practitioners, as these three roles correlated highly with one another.

Cutlip, Center and Broom (1985) found in a survey conducted of members in the Public Relations Society of America that most practitioners see themselves in the expert prescriber role, with communication technician following as the most commonly reported role. The survey data corresponded with previous findings that indicated practitioners who rated



themselves highly in the role of communication technician did not have a tendency to rate highly in regards to the other three roles.

However, practitioners who rated themselves highly on any one of the roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, or problem-solving process facilitator, tended to rate highly in terms of all three roles. These findings suggest that public relations roles may be collapsed to the two overarching roles of manager and technician. Broom and Smith (1979) noted that most public relations practitioners play a variety of roles in the course of their professional work, but most operate in one role more than others. Several researchers have noted that the four-role scheme makes conceptual sense; however, high correlations among the expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator roles are present. Consequently, these scholars have reduced Broom's four-role typology to a two-role typology including the roles of manager and technician (Lauzen, 1992; Reagan, et al., 1990).

It may be difficult to measure the role enactment of practitioners because of the dynamic character of their tasks and functions. In the most recent text on communications excellence, Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) viewed roles as ways of classifying the various behaviours an individual may enact in an organisation. Organisations could possibly be defined as systems of roles, and the Excellence Project succeeded in expanding the field of roles research. One way in which the Excellence Study differed from previous roles research is that questionnaire items asked communicators what role expectations the dominant coalition has expressed to them in addition to asking what roles they actually enact. The Excellence Project also surveyed CEOs to determine the expectations held of top communicators, including the role the senior practitioner should hold. Results indicated that CEOs expect the senior

communicator to be a manager who is an expert in media relations. Also, it was revealed that CEOs often hire a senior communicator due to his or her technical skills but realise technical skills alone are insufficient in dealing with a crisis or other major situation that requires strategic communication skills.

Dozier (1992) reviewed roles research in the first instalment of texts that chronicled the Excellence Project. Throughout the review, Dozier proposed 15 statements that summarised roles research at that time. The first proposition claimed that practitioner activities may parsimoniously be divided into the basic roles of manager and technician. Dozier's other 14 propositions specifically referred to ways that the managerial role is associated with characteristics of excellence, such as two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models of communication, environmental scanning, public relations programme planning and evaluation, and strategic decision-making involvement.

Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) later integrated those 14 propositions into the one proposition that the managerial role will be associated with other characteristics of excellent communications departments. Divisions of the managerial and technical roles for the senior communicator did, in fact, prove to distinguish which communications departments were excellent. The Excellence Study found that the availability of knowledge to hold a managerial role sets excellent departments apart from less excellent ones. Higher levels of technical expertise were also found in excellent communications departments; however, the accompaniment of managerial expertise maximised the value of technical skills.

According to Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002), organisational structure and culture significantly influence the practice of public relations within the company. Grunig, J. (1992)

recognised that the behaviour of the practitioner is essentially established according to organisational structure and the role of the public relations practitioner within that structure. Public relations practitioners assume the role they practice by adopting certain behaviours and strategies that allow them to cope with the situations they face on a daily basis (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 1985; 2000; Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg, 1996; 2004; Center and Jackson, 1995). There are also clear empirical linkages between practitioner's roles and Grunig's (Grunig and Hunt, 1984) four models of PR. Dozier (1992) suggests that:

*“Practitioners in organisations practicing the press agency and public information models of PR will engage in few activities that define the PR manager role. Practitioners in organisations practicing the two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models of PR are more likely to play the PR manager role.”* (Dozier, 1992, p.345)

Therefore, to understand practitioners' role performance, it is adequate to probe further into the models practiced by PR experts using Grunig's models - press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. Grunig and Grunig (1992) showed evidence that the four models can be reliably measured, that they are valid and that they do exist in real organisations. Grunig and Grunig admitted that “organisations often do not practice the models purely, many use different models for different situations and different programs.” (Grunig and Grunig, 1992, p.297)

Since this theoretical concept evolved in the USA, an important question arises out of its geographically restricted origin. The question is whether, and to what extent, it is applicable in other parts of the world. Although roles research in international settings is often based on

the two traditional US roles (Culbertson and Chen, 1996b), international roles studies often debate whether public relations practice/roles are similar across national and cultural borders, or generic across countries (Verčič, Grunig and Grunig, 1996). International roles studies (e.g., in Thailand and Japan) indicate that practitioners are moving away from the public relations technician role, and increasingly performing public relations management roles (Watson and Sallot, 2001). This is also a trend in Western countries such as the UK (Moss, Warnaby and Newman, 2000).

Although four roles are posited in theory, research using the scale has shown consistently that only two roles emerge from the analyses (Lauzen, 1992; Reagan, et al., 1990). Those two roles are the *public relations manager* and the *public relations technician* (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg, 1996; Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Cutlip, Center and Broom, 1985; 2000). This notion of a dominant role has received support from other scholars (Broom and Dozier, 1986; Dozier and Gottesman, 1982; Dozier, 1981). The Excellence Study (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002) outlines the general principles of public relations excellence that contribute to organisational effectiveness. Firstly, the public relations manager should manage communication programmes strategically, and have a direct reporting relationship with top management. Secondly, a public relations unit should be chaired by a manager who understands the managerial role of public relations. Lastly, public relations functions should be organised as integrated functions and be separated from other functions.

#### **a. Public relations managers**

Managers of public relations make policy decisions and are held accountable for public relations programmes' outcomes. Managers facilitate communication between management

and publics and guide management through what practitioners describe as a 'rational problem-solving process'. Managers also do engage in some technical work. Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) have suggested that there are two forms of managerial expertise: the administrative manager; and the strategic manager. The administrative manager is more involved in the "day-to-day operation of a well-run department." The strategic manager is "tied to a set of strategic tools" allowing the department to "contribute to the organisation's strategic planning process". In summary, public relations managers are assigned to do the following duties: develop goals and objectives for the department, prepare the departmental budget, develop strategies to solve PR problems, manage the organisation's response to issues, manage people, conduct evaluation research, use research to segment publics, and perform environmental scanning.

#### **b. Public relations technicians**

In contrast, the public relations technician's role is linked with the provision of services. Such technicians do not participate in management decision making. The technician carries out low-level duties for generating communication products such as writing news releases and features, writing speeches, coordinating press conferences or event coverage, taking photos, writing advertisements, producing audio-visual materials, creating and managing a speaker's bureau, producing publications, producing e-materials, and running the organisation's electronics media (website, blogs etc.).

### **3.5. Conclusion**

Empirical studies examining public relations models and practitioner roles showed that the manager role correlates most closely with the two-way symmetric and asymmetric models of public relations (Dozier, 1983). The Excellence Study states, in order to be excellent, public relations professionals must enact the manager role and apply two-way communication models. The studies conclude that the empirically derived manager role enactment “involves facilitating communication between publics and the dominant coalition, as well as facilitating problem solving” (Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier, 2002, p.237).

The purpose of communication according to the two-way symmetric model is developing ‘win-win’ solutions to conflicts between organisations and publics. Research suggests that the professional would act as a channel through which the public can communicate with and have influence over organisational decision-making. Public relations would also serve as negotiator and mediator between the organisation and its publics. This line of inquiry highlights the close correlation between the public relations function and “boundary spanning,” which describes how an organisation interacts with its environment (Jemison, 1984).

Leichty and Springston (1996) stated, “a boundary spanner interacts with people outside his or her own group and conveys information and influence between one’s primary group and outside groups” (p.468). They also pointed out that the literature separates boundary spanning activities into two separate types of interactions, one representing the views of management to stakeholders, the other informing management of the perceptions, expectations, and ideas of publics. Boundary spanning research offers a concise description of the likely activities of a professional applying the two-way symmetric communication model. It further helps to

clarify that the role of the public relations professional is inextricably linked to the purpose of the communication with its various publics, both internal and external. It suggests that to implement a two-way symmetrical model of communications, the professional must be prepared and qualified to wear more than one hat. However, as discussed, research has shown that none of these activities can be performed unless the dominant coalition has a shared understanding of the purpose of public relations and an expectation that public relations will function in this way.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSION IN THE MIDDLE EASTERN ARAB COUNTRIES

### 4.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the current status of the public relations profession in the Middle Eastern Arab countries in general, across three levels: the practice, education, and professional associations. Professionalisation has been a goal of public relations practice since the turn of the 20th century. There have been consistent efforts over the years by public relations associations to both legitimise and professionalise practice. Among those who have contributed to these efforts are Hunt and Grunig (1994); Cutlip, Centre and Broom (2006); Baskin and Aronoff, (1983; 1997); L'Etang and Pieczka (2004; 2006); Kim and Hon (1998); Broom and Dozier (1986); Olson (1989); Pratt (1986); and Rentner and Bissland (1990).

Abbott (1988); Freidson (1983) and Kurtz (1993), suggested four dimensions as a very general base for analysing professionalisation: 1) a profession relates *a specialised body of practical and problem-solving knowledge* that becomes relevant to the society (Abott, 1988) ; 2) a profession builds on the establishment of an *academic programme of study, qualification and training* that serves as base or tool for the transfer of abstract or formal knowledge (Abott, 1988; Wilensky, 1964); 3) the development of a *professional association or occupational network* provides for modes of regulating entrance into the profession, serves as a basis for knowledge exchange and the licensing of qualifications; and 4) professional associations also contribute to the *development of standards and norms* (code of ethics or conduct) for a specific occupational area of work (Wilensky, 1964; Kurtz, 1993).



#### **4.2. The public relations profession in the Middle Eastern Arab countries**

Public relations have been practiced in the Arab Middle Eastern countries for a long time. Some Middle Eastern scholars argue that the practice of public relations in Arab culture can be traced back to the early leaders of Babylonian culture and the ancient pharaohs who used persuasion to convince others to agree with their personal and societal ambitions. Freitag and Stokes (2009) stated that Hammurabi of Babylonia used the sheep-shearing season to gather his people for "town hall meetings". They also stated that pharaohs used the irrigation season to celebrate the Nile River and to disseminate information and news to farmers (Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Freitag and Stokes, 2009). Other Arab educators trace public relations history in the Middle East back 1400 years, certainly to the time of Prophet Mohammed's era with the dissemination of the new message, the new religion, and thus a new way of thinking, behaving and living peacefully with others (Kruckeberg, 1996; Aldemiri, 1988).

Al-Badr (2004) contended that public relations in the Middle East can be traced back at least 4,000 years, "as evidenced in a cuneiform tablet found in Iraq resembling a bulletin telling farmers how to grow better crops" (pp.192–193). Diab (2011) suggests that the Arab tribes have practiced aspects of public relations and diplomacy since the days of pre-Islam, by virtue of the circumstances and facts of various environments, which prompted them to interact in the relations of peaceful cooperation, both at the domestic level, between the Arab tribes in their interaction with each other, or at the external level, with neighbouring peoples (p.68).

Alanazi (1996) adds that the open market and annual festival in the Arab Peninsula before Islam, known as 'Souk Okaz' served as an example of a PR event, where Arabian tribes' poets and speakers competed for glory in demonstrations and competitions with other tribes.

Ghassob (2002 cited in Badran, Turk and Walters, 2003) dates the PR business in the Arab world more recently, to the 1930s. It is argued that it began in the Levant as a simple industry, catering to basic needs. PR then spread to the Arab Gulf countries when the Lebanese civil war in the 1970s forced many PR practitioners to flee to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and elsewhere.

Regardless of the length of the historical background, the time period of the public relations departments and agencies is relatively short, not exceeding 30 years (Kirat, 2005a). Abu Osba'a (1998) noted that, the practice of public relations in the modern Arab world was delayed due to several factors, including:

1. Most Arab states were under Western colonialism and did not gain their independence until the middle of the last century.
2. Most of the Arab world had no big business organisations at that time, except for Egypt which had ancient and well established companies.
3. Modern management in Arab institutions is a new type of Arab life. It was a result of contact with the West, and benefitted from their experience, especially through trade and education.
4. The lack of management training institutes and management development, which led to less attention to public relations as part of the management activities.

5. A lack of awareness of the importance of two-way communication between organisations and their public.

Abu Osba'a (1998) mentioned that the Arab world began to pay more attention to public relations and show more interest in its benefits only in the last three decades. The private business and public departments started to hire public relations staff and establish public relations sections, more international public relations agencies establish offices in the region, and more university faculties across the Arab world started to teach public relations.

Nevertheless, in the last two decades, public relations have witnessed development and expansion in some Arab countries and not in others, because of the difference in the political, economic and social environment in which it operates (Sunil, 2004 cited in Kirat, 2005a). Pearce (2008) stated that 20 years ago there were just two public relations agencies in the region with combined annual billings of little more than \$1 million. The Middle East is still a growth market for public relations agencies and strong international agencies are sought after and desired. Nowadays, there are over 100 PR agencies operating in the UAE, among them Asda'a Burson-Marsteller, Hill + Knowlton Strategies, Ketchum, MEMAC Ogilvy, Burson Marsteller - Jiwin, Impact Porter Novelli, Promoseven, Weber Shandwick, Edelman, TRACCS and SpotOn PR<sup>2</sup>. The Media Source and Media Guide's indicator shows an average of 63% increase in listed public relations agencies in the region between 2006 and 2010, with the majority based in the UAE, which experienced 110% growth in numbers.

Country	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	
Bahrain	10	11	15	15	18	80%
Egypt	9	10	13	14	11	22%
Jordan	7	10	12	12	10	43%
Kuwait	8	7	7	8	10	25%
Lebanon	10	10	12	12	9	-10%
Oman	3	5	5	5	5	67%
Palestine	2	2	3	3	3	50%
Qatar	8	9	12	15	15	88%
Saudi Arabia	18	17	24	28	22	22%
Syria	1	2	3	3	3	200%
UAE	58	74	87	96	122	110%
Yemen	1	2	2	2	0	-100%
Total	141	165	200	218	230	63%

Figure (1) – PR growth in the Arab Middle Eastern countries.<sup>3</sup>

Middle East public relations veteran and former chairman of MEPRA, Jack Pearce (2008) characterised the growth of public relations in the Arabian Gulf as phenomenal. He referred to three main factors:

- *Economic growth, which led to the increase in the number of companies and enterprises, those new and old companies established public relations departments or contracted public relations agencies.*
- *Increased demand for public relations agencies' services has led to increase the number of international agencies operating in the region and the establishment of local agencies, which encouraged many people to enter this field, either through study or a change in the profession.*
- *The range of services being provided. Typically companies who are appointing a public relations agency for the first time do so for "free advertising," as they see*

<sup>3</sup> - Available from: [mediaguide.com](http://mediaguide.com). [Accessed 02 Feb 2014]

*media relations. However with time they start to utilise other services like CRM, CSR, internal communications, and investor relations.*

Robinson (n.d), CEO Middle East of Hill and Knowlton, adds other factors behind the blossoming and flourishing of the public relations industry in the last five years such as:

*“the huge external investment fuelled by oil revenue surpluses, modernisation programmes across a number of states, campaigns for tourism and foreign direct investment, a more determined set of Arab nations wanting to take an equal footing on the world stage and have their achievements recognised, swelling stock markets and a huge mix of foreign businesses and foreign nationals present in the region.”*

Kirat (2005a) agrees, and says:

*“The prominence of public relations in the Arab world has never been greater. With the advent of globalisation, information technology and the information and digital society, organisations whether private or public are giving more importance to their public and public opinion. The democratisation process is underway requiring more transparency, two-way communication and dialogue. Public relations in the Arab world is gaining ground and importance among politicians, businessmen and various organisations and institutions in all aspects of life. Organisations are adapting themselves to a new environment that requires strong and effective public relations departments. Universities and colleges are responding to the new demands of the job markets. Schools*

*and departments of journalism, mass communication and public relations are mushrooming in the region.” (Kirat, 2005a)*

According to Jennie Bishop, IIR’s Conference Director for the Public Relations Congress (cited in Al Bababa, 2005)

*“The PR industry [in the Arab countries] has reached a level of growth and maturity” with “the current perception of PR in the region, raising the standards and practices of the local industry, to the often conflicted but symbiotic relationship between public relations practices and the press in the Arab world”.*

Sunil John, Chief Executive Officer of ASDA’A Burson, asserts that:

*“PR is relatively new to the Arab world. Yet, by 2009, barely a decade after the profession first became institutionalised here; total fee revenues reached approximately US\$150 million. Today, the overall value of the industry, including work done by in-house communications departments, stands at about US\$500 million. If current trends continue, there is every reason to believe that the industry will be worth US\$1 billion annually within a decade.” (Sunil, 2011)*

According to the World PR Report 2013, produced by the Holmes Report and the International Communications Consultancy Organisation, the region’s PR industry is witnessing growth at a rate sizably above the global average. The report reveals that the

Middle East saw a 10.4 percent year-on-year expansion in 2013 compared to the global growth of 7.9 percent. The report also found that Middle Eastern PR agencies possessed an above-average optimism about increasing profits in that year, both domestically (7.8 out of 10 compared to 7.4 global average) and internationally (7.2 to 6.1). Moreover, the Holmes Report reveals that the world's 100 most important in-house communicators collectively control budgets in excess of \$6.5bn. 48 of the Influence 100 are based in North America (compared to 50 in the previous year), with a further 13 located in the UK. The remainder are spread across 23 countries around the world, including Australia, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE as well as all of the major markets in Western Europe<sup>4</sup>.

Though the statistics portray a promising picture moving forward, the challenges facing PR in the region are not dissimilar to those presented to the global industry. The public relations profession in the Arab states remains an understudied area (Taylor, 2001) and is suffering from a wide range of problems, malpractice, and misconceptions. Generally, though the level of development of public relations in the Middle East varies, sometimes public relations is still thought to mean procuring visas, arranging transportation, and performing hospitality functions (Ayish and Kruckeberg, 2004). In Arab nations, “a press release, for example, may read more like a political proclamation than a news announcement” (Zaharna, 1995, p.255). Oliver Stelling, the Senior Communications Consultant at the strategic communications consultancy FutureScore says:

*PR is a relatively new discipline in the Middle East that existed for only about 30 years, most of that as media relations and events. Only in the last ten years*

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<sup>4</sup> - Available from: <http://www.holmesreport.com>. [Accessed 02 Feb 2014]

*has there been a rise of strategic PR as a discipline, partly a result of the arrival of “new” clients from Western countries who expected the same service levels. As a result the region has plenty of PR practitioners with little or no real strategic counselling experience.*

Avi Bhojani, Group CEO at Bates PanGulf (BPG) public relations group, agrees:

*In the Middle East, the industry is still in its formative stages, and therefore, is more media relations focused.*

Fatima Rabbani, a public relations practitioner at Bates Pan Gulf group says:

*PR in the Middle East is in its infancy stage and very much hinged on media release rather than PR as a tool of reputation management. Clients are very advertising centric as it is aligned to their sales driven objectives, thus PR in many ways is used only as a one way tool. Besides, due to journalistic limitations, there is dearth of editorial rigor and analysis, which then feeds into the power of what public relations can achieve as compared to the US or other sophisticated markets.*

Ayad Nahas, Public Relations Manager, at Deloitte public relations agency in the Middle East agrees:

*The value of public relations (PR) is a concept that sometimes eludes some business leaders in the Middle East region. PR is in some cases associated*



*solely with advertising, or perceived to be an exercise in networking alone or a simple meet and greet. Today, the Middle East lags behind the West in its understanding of public relations. However, numerous business executives are starting to realise the added value of PR with respect to providing exposure at a minimal cost and being a highly-valuable tool in countering a crisis.*

Sugich (2008) says that “whereas in the West the practice of public relations evolved out of journalism, in the Middle East public relations emerged directly from advertising and the practice of PR is still perceived as advertising in sheep’s clothing. In consequence, few practices have made any attempt to develop or demonstrate the possibilities of this rich and varied profession”.

Halim Abou Seif, Public Relations Manager for Rada Research, (cited in Spiers, 2007) says, "there is not enough understanding among Egyptian companies about what public relations can do." He adds:

*“Business people in the Middle East don't know that in the US and Europe, public relations is much more than generating favourable publicity and knowing what kind of story is likely to be printed or broadcast. They don't know that a strategic goal is to project a favourable public image, one of good corporate citizenship. Nor, that allied with that is the first responsibility of public relations: to persuade management that the reality must correspond with the public image.”*

Dave Robinson, CEO Middle East of Hill and Knowlton agrees and says that “while PR is flourishing it is certainly not yet mature as an industry and still lacks the recognition and stature that it enjoys in some markets - particularly the West”. Robinson (n.d) goes further and says:

*“the challenges that are traditional to developing markets - HR issues, client education, budgets, evaluation, scope of services, role within the marketing mix - are matched with indigenous problems such as the need to forge strong Arabic skills (particularly in writing), the complexity and the limitations of the regional media, lack of reliable research in terms of consumers, opinion formers, etc., and clients who have been conditioned by advertising agencies that the only ‘real’ solution to a communications challenge is to spend above the line. Training and development are keys not only in terms of developing and retaining talent within agencies, but also to ensuring there is a common level of understanding and best practice in the burgeoning in-house PR sector within the Middle East, as well as among clients.”*

In a study on the situation of public relations in the Sultanate of Oman, Shezawi (2008, cited in Algalab, 2011) summarised the most significant problems facing public relations there:

*1. Lack of proper consideration by senior management of the role played by public relations, to recognise the position of public relations and its important role in the enterprise, and that is reflected the continued underestimation of its importance and position.*

- 2. The prevalence of concepts in the enterprise about the public relations duties, activities and tasks, different from the substantive concepts of public relations, and its real mission and role at the enterprise.*
- 3. Inadequate perception of public relations, either by the working people or by the public, as they consider it as a secondary rather than a productive activity.*
- 4. Public relations suffers from poor budget, reduced allocations, more pressure on its activity expenditures, and continued increase in the cost of services.*
- 5. Lack of specialists in the field of public relations, insufficient expertise and elements specialised in different aspects of public relations.*
- 6. Lack of scientific methods in planning, setting goals and activities, and use of research and evaluation.*
- 7. Overlap between specialties of public relations departments and some other departments in the enterprise and the absence of sufficient coordination that allows for overcoming this interference.*
- 8. Lack of cooperation from other departments with the public relations department in its various activities.*
- 9. The small size of the public relations department or team in the enterprise leads to it being underestimated and not connected to the appropriate administrative organisation or to the senior management.*

In terms of management and organisation, Kirat (2005) found that the profession suffers from:

- Management's attitudes toward the profession: such attitudes are characterised by considering PR as a tool of publicity and positive propaganda for a good performance of the organisation. The management does not give sufficient importance and interest

to the department of public relations. Therefore PR departments are not enjoying a good position in the hierarchy of the organisation. They are often marginalised and do not have direct access to the top management.

Elizabeth Cowie, Media Relations Manager, G2 Dubai, agrees with this and says:

*“Sadly, there is considerable evidence that many clients still consider PR to be a cheap alternative to costly above-the-line campaigns. Such attitudes are characterised by considering PR as a tool of publicity and positive propaganda for a good performance of the organisation. The management is neither interested in the public's feedback, nor the public's opinion.”*

- Goals, roles and functions of PR are often ‘vague’. Most senior managers neither have a clear understanding of the purpose and value of public relations, nor do they have a clear idea about the tasks and roles of PR. This has led over the years to a confusion of tasks, and very often public relations is restrained to secondary roles on one hand and many of its tasks are performed by other departments in the organisation on the other hand. This situation has also led to the lack of leadership and consultative roles of public relations.
- Some of the public relations department have no strategic vision, do not have a plan of action and have no clear-cut straight-forward goals and objectives. Research is one of the main drawbacks of the PR practice in the Arab world. This affects negatively its output and performance. One cannot have a strategy and efficient planning without sound research, opinion polls and content analysis.

- Lack of qualified manpower: qualified practitioners in the Arab world are still lacking. New graduates are not generally hired, and a good number of the PR manpower does not have the required qualifications.
- Lack of resources: due to the lack of understanding and misconceptions PR departments do not get the right resources to assume their tasks and responsibilities. Most of the time, they do not get sufficient budget to perform the basic tasks of PR such as research, evaluation and strategic planning.

#### **4.2.1. Public relations practice in the Middle Eastern Arab countries**

In the Middle East, hospitality functions for dignitaries have constituted public relations (Ayish and Kruckeberg, 1999). Examining the public relations models practiced in the Arab countries in contrast with the models practiced in the US and Western countries, Kruckeberg (1996) suggested that many of the values of Middle Eastern culture are distinctly non-Western, and Middle Eastern culture in some ways does not lend itself to Western public relations practice. For example, a 1985 study of UAE practitioners found that they view public relations not as a communications function but as a social relations one, placing a great deal of emphasis on receiving delegations (Creedon, Al-Khaja and Kruckeberg, 1995). Moreover, Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2005) and Zaharna (1995) found that the Arab public relations model involves relationship-building and the process of public relations involves communication as a social ritual, rather than communication as transmission of information; it involves interpersonal communication, rather than mass communication; it involves relationship-building, as opposed to persuasion (Vujnovic and Kruckeberg 2005).

The interpersonal influence model (Sriramesh, 1991) is an asymmetric one, and it often includes unethical practice. The researchers note that this model can be successful in meeting organisational goals in societies with rigid cultures and authoritarian political systems and they believe this model relates to the personal influence model known as a “favour bank” (Grunig, J., et al., 1995). A personal influence model is commonly used in lobbying and media relations where public relations practitioners use interpersonal relationships and connections to facilitate communication (Lawrence and Vasques, 2004). In the exploratory study of public relations in India, Sriramesh and Grunig (1988) found that public relations practitioners used interpersonal communication to develop personal influence with key individuals, particularly in the media, the government and among activists. These practitioners used hospitality relations by giving gifts, hosting dinners and cocktails to relevant publics from whom they could later claim return favour.

The cultural interpreter model is also widely practiced in Arab countries, particularly in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, where public relations companies are using locals as token account handlers and translators (Sugich, 2008). Saadan’s (2009) study found that public relations practitioners in Yemen perform different roles; it was the technical role in the first place, manager role in second, followed by the role of the director, and the role of executive director. In terms of models; personal influence model came in the first place, followed by cultural interpreter.

Kirat (2005) discussed the practice of public relations in the Arab world, and looked at the misconceptions, confusion in tasks and prerogatives, lack of professional manpower, and the absence of a culture of democracy, transparency and public opinion. Kirat found that public relations focus on publicity and the press agency role at the expense of strategic planning,

research and evaluation. Most of these departments' PR output may be described as one-way official communication and can be likened to the early concept of public relations in the US.

#### **4.2.2. Public relations education in the Middle Eastern Arab countries**

During the past 15 years, public relations education around the world has grown and changed significantly and substantially (Botan and Taylor, 2004; Grunig and Grunig, 2002; Lattimore and Baskin, 2011), however; scholars maintain that the existing worldwide body of public relations knowledge and curricula has a distinct US bias (Sriramesh, 2002). This is due to the fact that little research literature exists that has been written by non-American public relations scholars. The absence of indigenous research and literature on public relations education from countries other than the US is one of the main reasons why American literature on public relations is so significant to most universities teaching the discipline, and also to organisations that practice public relations worldwide (Sriramesh, 2002).

Despite that, public relations academic programmes are still housed either in departments/schools of business or in departments/schools of communication. In some cases, PR programs have their own independent standing as department units within the university structure but this is more the exception than the rule (Yannas, n.d). Nonetheless, the public relations curriculum can be pictured as a series of three concentric circles. The smallest central circle encloses the subjects specifically concerned with public relations practice. The second larger circle has the subjects in the general field of communication. The third and largest circle represents the general liberal arts and humanities background, which are essential preparation for a successful professional (IPRA Gold Paper No. 7, 1990)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> - Available from: [http://www.ipra.org/\\_links/\\_pdf/Gold\\_Paper\\_no\\_7.pdf](http://www.ipra.org/_links/_pdf/Gold_Paper_no_7.pdf). [Accessed 15 May 2010]

In the 1970s, Cairo University, for example, first recognised public relations as a legitimate area of study in 1970 when the university expanded its journalism programme into a college of information with three departments: print journalism, broadcast journalism and television, and public relations and advertising. Two Egyptian men, Ibrahim Eman and Hassan Tawfiq, now retired, developed the first public relations course in the region and a textbook to accompany it (Creedon, et al., 1995).

Samir Hussein, who joined the Cairo faculty in the late 1970s had studied public relations practice both in the US and Britain, taught his students a Western model of public relations, i.e., Euro-American, market-driven approach. While studying in the US in the 1970s, Hussein met several leading US public relations educators including Scott Cutlip and Allen Center. He used their classic textbook, *Effective Public Relations*, in a public relations class (Creedon, et al., 1995). The development of modern public relations education in the Middle East, however, has not been limited to Egypt. At least one Saudi Arabian university had a public relations department by the mid-1970s and universities in Lebanon, Jordan, Sudan, Iraq, and Kuwait also offered at least one course in public relations. (Creedon, et al., 1995)

Public relations education is also available in the form of certificate and diploma courses offered by various kinds of institutions, including professional public relations associations. In some countries, such as UAE, the local public relations association formally accredits courses in public relations. In other cases various kinds of training institutions offer public relations courses accredited by international bodies such as CIPR and IPR.



The first university-level public relations course in UAE University was offered in 1978 and that single course remained until 1993 when the decision to develop a public relations degree programme was made. The public relations major model curriculum was designed and based largely on the US model for undergraduate public relations curriculum, in accordance with standards of the US Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications and a model curriculum proposed by seven US-based public relations/marketing/ communication/educational associations. The proposal, which included a timeline for implementation of the major by September 1994, was approved by UAE Minister of Higher Education and the Chancellor of the University. (Creedon, et al., 1995)

In a leading study carried out among three groups of the mass communication-graduating students at Ain Shams University, in Egypt, (Abed Al-Barry, 2005) showed that students look for more practical course work rather than theoretical knowledge. The study found that in the Arab states students rely heavily on theoretical knowledge and memorisation. Furthermore, some scholars equate public relations with publicity activities, writing news releases and coordinating special events. In his work, Abed Al-Barry (2005) stated:

*“One possible criticism is directed toward the status of public relations teaching in the Arab countries is the lack of practical methods in the educational institutes in the Arab countries and the lack of practical methods in the educational process” (p.27).*

The researcher argued that teaching public relations in the Arab world needs to be reconstructed in light of the surrounding changes in terms of technology and pedagogical techniques. The research evidence showed that teaching public relations needs to be revisited

and reconstructed because the contents of most of the Arabic textbooks are outdated. The second major result dealt with the training practices. All students emphasised their need for an organised training programme that utilises theoretical experience and the practical aspects (Abed Al-Barry, 2005).

#### **a) Public relations education in KSA**

Rapid economic growth, industrial development, and significant growth in the country's service sector has increased demand for highly-qualified PR professionals (Al-Habeeb, 2007). Education courses in KSA range from in-service training by employers and within government ministries to formal university degrees and post-graduate courses. According to Al-Habeeb (2007), King Saud University in Riyadh was the first university to establish a PR degree programme in 1976. Al-Habeeb (2007) reviewed the curricula for media departments in four important universities in Saudi Arabia: King Saud University, King AbdulAziz University, Umm al-Qura University, and Imam University. He found that the media department in each university includes journalism, PR, radio and television, and marketing communications and advertising programmes. Many PR programmes are taught as part of a BA degree in communication, mass communication or journalism. Some universities also teach PR to complement other disciplines such as marketing and business management. Beside courses provided by Saudi universities, short courses are offered by development agencies, professional institutes and private colleges.

Similar to other areas in mass communication, public relations curricula at KSA universities resemble those at many Western colleges, plus modules related to public relations from an Islamic point of view. For example, students at Umm Al-Qura University will typically study

an introduction to public relations, plus definition of public relations as a corporate communications process; role of public relations; history and development of public relations; methods of managing the public relations department; status of public relations department in the organisational structure and public relations management; Islam and the principles of public relations; and activities practiced by the department of public relations. Furthermore, students get practical training to prepare them for the actual environment of a public relations department, this includes training students in the preparation of printed information materials and production (newsletters, brochures, posters, segments, advertising methods).

In his study of PR textbooks used in KSA's universities, Attaleb (2005) found they were mostly outdated and did not meet the needs of students and researchers. The texts lacked adequate contextual coverage, recent trends and development in PR and the influence of IT and social media. Al-Habeeb (2007) also highlighted this issue and noted that Arabic PR literature suffered a lack of books and journals in the Arabic language. Those published were mostly journalistic articles, published articles in academic journals or unpublished academic theses and dissertations. Most PR literature written in Arabic had poor and/or outdated theoretical perspectives and, frequently, content from Western books that was copied and poorly translated.

#### **b) Public relations education in UAE**

The first university-level public relations course in the Emirates was offered in 1978 at the Department of Mass Communication in United Arab Emirates University. The public relations course was also required of all journalism and broadcasting students (Creedon, et

al., 1995). In 1995, 20 women students were admitted into the newly-designed public relations major programme at the United Arab Emirates University in Al-Ain. The programme was based on the American model for an undergraduate public relations curriculum (Creedon, et al.,1995).

In 2005, five UAE universities offered public relations graduate and post graduate programs (Kirat, 2005). Nowadays, The college of communication is an integral part of the University of Sharjah, and it is divided into two separate departments: the Department of Mass Communication and the Department of Public Relations. The College of Communication and Media Sciences at Zayed University offers BA and MA degrees in Communication and Media Sciences (specialisation in Strategic Public Relations). The Department of Mass Communication and Public Relations at Ajman University of Science and Technology (AUST) offers a four-year Bachelor of Arts degree programme in Mass Communication and Public Relations accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education. The Department of Mass Communication at the American University of Sharjah offers a programme that is designed to provide the students with both technical and academic knowledge of the discipline of mass communication in general and the specific professional concentrations offered by the department: namely, advertising, journalism and public relations.

UAE universities provide students with a course designed to introduce students to the fields of public relations, including: definitions and functions; writing skills for public relations, including press releases, memos and letters, speeches, public service communication and annual reports; case studies in public relations in public and private organisations in the United Arab Emirates and in the AGCC states; organisational communication as an important aspect of internal practices at public and private organisations. It focuses on the channels,

types, and directions of communication within organisations as well as the parties involved. Beside the courses and programs offered at the universities, there are many private colleges and training Institutes providing courses, workshops, and professional training in the field of public relations and corporate communications, such as MEPRA<sup>6</sup>, Turjuman<sup>7</sup>, Meirc<sup>8</sup>, Pinnacle<sup>9</sup>, and IIRME<sup>10</sup>. Most of the courses and training programmes on offer are credited by international professional bodies like CIPR and IPRA.

#### **4.2.3. Professional PR groups in the Middle Eastern Arab countries**

Middle Eastern Arab countries have established professional associations since the 1960s when the Arab Public Relations Society (APRS) in Egypt was founded, followed by similar models in the rest of the Arab states. The Arab Public Relations Society (APRS)<sup>11</sup> was established in 1965 in Cairo. It was recognised internationally by the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) and the European Public Relations Confederation (CERP) at an international conference held in Dublin, Ireland in 1966.

In an effort to provide members with clear ethical guidelines, public relations organisations in several countries have outlined ethics codes. These codes consist of written “rules”, spelled out in short sentences, telling the practitioner how to behave ethically in the course of their daily activity. All the various codes are derived from the Code of Athens, developed by the

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<sup>6</sup> - <http://www.mepra.org/>

<sup>7</sup> - <http://www.turjuman.net>

<sup>8</sup> - <http://www.meirc.com/>

<sup>9</sup> - <http://www.pinnaclepr.net/dubai/contact-us-2/>

<sup>10</sup> - <http://www.iirme.com/>

<sup>11</sup> - [www.aprsinfo.org](http://www.aprsinfo.org)

International Public Relations Association (IPRA) in 1965<sup>12</sup>. Other examples of public relations associations in the Arab Middle East countries are given below.

### **1. The Middle East Public Relations Association (MEPRA)**

The Middle East Public Relations Association- MEPRA (<http://www.mepra.org>) was formed in 2001 by a group of PR agencies that sought to raise awareness of the discipline to a broader audience and to set themselves apart from the market by their adherence to international standards and ethics. The Middle East Public Relations Association (MEPRA) introduces itself as “a non-profit organisation that represents the interests of the Middle East public relations industry. MEPRA endeavours to highlight the strategic role of public relations in the Arab world and help set high standards for quality and ethical conduct by consultancy firms”<sup>13</sup>. Moreover; MEPRA aims to encourage and promote the region’s public relations industry by helping to raise professional standards in consultancy practice, raise awareness of PR as an important economic and social activity, and provide a forum for the discussion of PR industry issues.

MEPRA is registered at Dubai Media City in the United Arab Emirates and is a member of the International Committee of Public Relations Consultancies Associations (ICCO), which represents leading PR consultancies across 29 countries. In December 2006 MEPRA joined the UK-based International Communications Consultancy Organisation (ICCO), an international umbrella-organisation of public relations consultancies, in launching the MEPRA-ICCO College to offer on-line and class-room courses for managerial, supervisory, and entry level public relations professionals and aspirants. The MEPRA-ICCO College is

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<sup>12</sup> - Available from: <http://www.globalalliancepr.org/project.php?id=1>. [Accessed 15 May 2011]

<sup>13</sup> - Available from: <http://www.mepra.org/about.php>. [Accessed 05 May 2008]

aiming to improve the standards of professionalism among PR practitioners across the Middle East region; the MEPRA-ICCO College will offer a modular approach to learning.<sup>14</sup>

The code of practice<sup>15</sup> of Middle East Public Relations (MEPRA) emphasises that all members shall “have a positive duty to observe the highest standards in the practice of public relations and where relevant share best codes of practice”. Furthermore members “have a positive duty at all times to respect the truth and shall not disseminate false or misleading information knowingly or recklessly, and to use proper care to avoid doing so inadvertently”.

Moreover; the code states that all members shall “safeguard the confidences of both present and former clients and shall not disclose or use these confidences to the disadvantage or prejudice of such clients or to the financial advantage of the member firm. A MEPRA member firm shall not misuse information regarding its client's business for financial or other gain. Moreover, members shall not use inside information for gain. Nor may a consultancy, its members or staff directly invest in their clients' securities without the prior written permission of the client”.

## **2. The International Public Relations Association - Gulf Chapter (IPRA-GC)**

The International Public Relations Association (IPRA) - Gulf Chapter (IPRA-GC) (<http://www.ipra-gc.com/Home.aspx>) is a local chapter of the International Public Relations Association. IPRA-GC was initially formed in 2003 with the support of Saudi Aramco. It has more than 350 members from GCC countries including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar,

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<sup>14</sup> - Press release issued by MEPRA on Dubai, UAE, 13 December 2006. Available from: <http://www.mepra.org/about.php>. [Accessed 05 May 2008]

<sup>15</sup> - Available from: [www.mepra.com](http://www.mepra.com) . [Accessed 10 May 2010]

Kuwait, UAE and Oman with headquarters located in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The chapter has an elected board chaired by a president, and has an executive vice president as well as vice presidents for each region in addition to a vice president for training, membership, media relations and a treasurer. The chapter's vision is to be recognised throughout the Gulf region for advancing PR excellence. IPRA-GC's objectives are to develop its members' PR skills and expertise, broaden their experience in the international PR arena and to establish stronger ties among PR professionals throughout the region.

#### **a) PR professional groups in KSA**

Professional groups cannot be formed in KSA without prior governmental permission; therefore KSA-based PR practitioners join professional groups or associations in other countries or operating internationally such as:

- The Arab Public Relations Society (APRS): established in 1966 in Cairo. It was recognised internationally in 1969 by the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) and the European Public Relations Confederation (CERP) (Algalab, 2011; Sriramesh, 2003);
- **The Middle East Public Relations Association (MEPRA):** located in Dubai, it was formed in 2001 by a group of PR agencies to raise awareness of the discipline to a broader audience and to set themselves apart from the market by their adherence to international standards and ethics (MEPRA, 2014);
- **The International Public Relations Association-Gulf Chapter (IPRA-GC):** the regional chapter of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA-GC) was initially formed in 2003 with the support of Saudi Aramco. It has more than 350 members from GCC countries including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE and Oman, with headquarters located in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia (IPRA-GC, 2014).



In spite of the absence of local associations, Saudi practitioners are active within those regional and international associations. For example, Mohamed A. Al Ayed, Chief Executive Officer of the TRACCS agency network has been engaged in PR practice in the Middle East for more than 20 years. He came to prominence in 1998 when establishing TRACCS in Jeddah. In 2005, as part of his mission to promote the PR industry across the region, Mr Al Ayed organised and chaired Saudi Arabia's first Public Relations Forum, which attracted approximately 400 leading practitioners. Other leading practitioners are Abdulaziz Abdullah Al Manie and Faisal Al-Zahrani. Mr Al Manie has been a member of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (UK) since 1997 and Mr Al-Zahrani, has served as President of IPRA-GC.

#### **b) PR professional groups in UAE**

There are two public relations professional bodies in the United Arab Emirates: The Middle East Public Relations Association (MEPRA) and Emirates Public Relations Association (EPRA). The Middle East Public Relations (MEPRA) is located in Dubai<sup>16</sup> while Emirates Public Relations Association (EPRA)<sup>17</sup> is located in Abu Dhabi. The Emirates Public Relations Association (EPRA) was founded in 2002. EPRA endeavours through its activities to coordinate the efforts of workers in the field of public relations, develop the profession of public relations, and formulate a code of ethics, rules and bylaws to regulate the profession of public relations.

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<sup>16</sup> - (<http://www.mepra.org>)

<sup>17</sup> - <http://www.epra.ae>

### **4.3. Conclusion**

In general; on the one hand, the practice and education of public relations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates has come a long way from its early incarnation 20 years ago, on the other hand, the public relations profession in the Arab countries is still in the early stage of its maturity and formation and is affected by the absence or the lack of democracy, freedom of expression and freedom of the press in those countries (Kirat, 2005).

## **CHAPTER FIVE: EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES ON PUBLIC RELATIONS**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a framework for assessing how the environment influences the practices of public relations within specific countries or regions. First, the present chapter introduces a theoretical framework to explore the relationship between five environmental variables in a society and the practice of public relations (Sriramesh and Verčič, 2003). These five variables are, a) a country's political/legal system, b) level of activism, c) culture, d) economy, and e) media infrastructure/practices. Then, the research moves closer to shedding light on the political and socioeconomic environment that influences the nature and state of public relations practice in KSA and UAE.

Practitioners and scholars are aware of the impact that socioeconomic and political environments have on the practices of public relations (Botan, 1992; Culbertson and Jeffers, 1992; Culbertson, et al., 1993; Sriramesh, 2004; Stanton, 1991; van Leuven and Pratt, 1996; Grunig and Grunig, 1996; Zaharna, 2001). James Grunig (1992) defined public relations as “the management of communication between an organisation and its publics” (p.4). He underscored that its major purpose is to facilitate understanding among people and other entities such as organisations' publics, or societies, providing them with a way to stay close to their customers, employees, and other strategic constituencies. Broom, et al. (2000) summarised the definition of an organisation-public relationship as the following:

*“Organisation-public relationships are represented by the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between an organisation and its publics. These relationships have properties that are distinct from the identities, attributes, and perceptions of the individuals and social collectives in the relationships. Though dynamic in nature, organisation-public relationships can be described at a single point in time and tracked over time”* (p.18).

Grunig, J. (1992) maintained that to produce goodwill, a good image, or a favourable climate of public opinion, and to develop programmes for a general public or a mass audience, public relations must develop relations with stakeholders in the internal or external environment that are able to constrain or enhance the ability of an organisation to accomplish its mission.

In the IABC Excellence Study, organisations are viewed as organic structures that are located in their environments. Therefore, environmental factors will affect organisational processes as well as the public relations practices of an organisation. For example, societal culture will affect organisational culture, and organisational culture will determine strategic choices of specific public relations models. Culbertson and Chen (1996b) have also argued that a “nation’s political system and culture do shape its practice of public relations. Related factors include social stratification, the nature of personal relationships, media credibility, economic development, and stage of nation building, emphasis on personal loyalty and harmony, and presence or absence of elites created in part by colonial rulers”.

Organisations are frequently conceptualised and studied as if they were living organisms by using systems theory (Bowen, 2000; Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2000; Grunig, J., 1992;

Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Long and Hazleton, 1987). Katz and Kahn (1967) suggested the “systems theory” approach as it is “basically concerned with problems of relationships, of structure, and of interdependence rather than with the constant attributes of objects” (p.18). Further, Katz and Kahn (1967) advocated that organisations be viewed as open systems. Thus, organisations are entities that possess boundaries where actors compete internally and externally.

Simoes’ (1992) emphasised that the role of the public relations officer is much more that of an administrator than that of a communicator. He adds that public relations is performed in many ways: first, by means of analysing tendencies concerning the “organisation’s behaviour against public expectations and interest”; second, by means of predicting consequences of the “clash between the organisations’ actions and the publics’ expectancies in the realm of conjuncture evolution”; third, by means of advising the “organisations’ leaders, warning them about the occurrence of possible conflicts and their causes, and presenting suggestions of policies and procedures that avoid conflict with the public.” Finally, public relations is performed by means of “implementation of planned programmes of information focusing on the various publics” (p.189).

## **5.2. Organisations and external environment**

Using the lens provided by systems theory (Long and Hazleton, 1987; Hazleton, 1992), Hazleton and Long (1985; 1988) conceptualised the public relations process as an open systems model, consisting of a multi-dimensional environment or super system with five environmental dimensions, legal/political, social, economic, technological, and competitive, and three subsystems, organisational, communication, and publics (originally ‘target

audiences’). Systems theory suggests that the external environment exerts pressure on a system or company to change (Cutlip, et al., 1985; Grunig and Grunig, 1989). Public relations departments thus serve another role important to systems theory by enabling a company to be ‘open’. An open system or company is one that interacts with the external environment by exchanging information, gauging environmental changes suggested by the information, and continually reacting to those changes (Cutlip, et al., 1985; Naumann and Lincoln, 1989). Scholarship in international public relations research (Grunig and Grunig, 2004; Grunig, Grunig and Verčič, 1998; Verčič, et al., 1996; Sriramesh, 2009) examined the effect of different variables on public relations and emphasised that in order to reach a level of effective PR in specific countries; practitioners need to have a thorough knowledge base of the social system, its historical development as well as its cultural development. This will assist and prepare professionals for international performance responsibilities in order to facilitate international PR professionals and prevent major performance blunders.

The five environmental variables identified in the theoretical framework are a) a country’s political/legal system, b) level of activism, c) culture, d) economy, and e) media infrastructure/practices (Sriramesh and Verčič, 2003). Taylor (2001) also calls this contextual research, that is, research about the nature and state of public relations practice in specific countries. Similarly, Verčič, et al. (1996) identified five contextual variables that could influence the practice of the normative principles. The contextual variables identified were the political-economic system, culture, the extent of activism, the level of development and the media system. A variety of scholars have focused on this approach and defined the main contextual items that affect professional development. Taylor (2001) has named the approach “contextualised research” and provides a summary of representative studies.

### **a) Political and legal system**

Most of the body of knowledge divided the political systems/regimes around the world mainly into democratic or authoritarian (Heywood, 1997; Millar, 1987). Between these two categories, there are other types of political systems, such as countries with restricted democratic practices, monarchies, totalitarian regimes, colonial and imperial dependencies, and protectorates, (Sriramesh and Verčič, 2009). Each of these represents a different type or level of freedom and civil liberties.

Democratic and authoritarian regimes may be distinguished both in terms of their objectives as well as their means of achieving them. The democratic regimes in Western countries relied on traditional political and legal language, emphasis on electoral and civic rights, democratic constitution and institutions and the formal liberty and equality of the political system. Thus besides guaranteeing individual rights they also support free competitive market society (Heywood, 1997; Millar, 1987).

Authoritarian regimes decide what is good for individuals. The ruling elite impose their values on society irrespective of its members' wishes. Authoritarian refers to a form of government which insists on unqualified obedience, conformity and coercion (Heywood, 1997; Millar, 1987). On the other hand, an authoritarian system was defined by Linz (1998) as:

*“one in which there is limited political pluralism without elaborate and guiding ideology (but with distinctive mentalities), without intensive or extensive political mobilisation and in which the leader (or a small group)*

*exercises power within formally ill-defined limits, but actually quite predictable ones.”*

Przeworski (1991) argues:

*“In an authoritarian system it is certain that political outcomes will not include those adverse to the will of the power apparatus, whereas in a democracy there is no group whose preferences and resources can predict outcomes with near certainty.” (p.47)*

Authoritarian regimes come in a variety of types: military, single party, dominant party, personal or traditional or some combination of features from these various types. Scholars (Sriramesh and Verčič, 2009; Hallin and Mancini, 2004) assume a pluralistic democratic system as the environment where public relations is most advanced and practised in a strategic manner. But pluralistic democracy is not one political system in the world, such as countries with restricted democratic practices, monarchies, authoritarian regimes, totalitarian regimes, colonial and imperial dependencies, and protectorates. Each of these spawns a different type of public relations practice (Sriramesh and Verčič, 2009). Sriramesh (2009) Asserts that:

*“Democracy increases the opportunity for public opinion to influence social system decisions and actions, and therefore PR as a profession can be directly related to the public opinion empowerment advancements. The development of open-records laws, consumer protection laws, the restriction on lobbying and on political contributions and the development of unions have all increased the*



*need for organisations to communicate within the social system of which they form a part.”*

Most of the body of knowledge also assumes a pluralistic democratic system as the environment where public relations is most advanced and practised in a strategic manner. Hallin and Mancini (2004) introduced four dimensions as a guideline to identify the similarities and differences between political communication systems in new democracies. These dimensions are:

- a. development of media markets - describes the relationship between the media and their economic context both nationally and internationally;
- b. role of the state - is crucial to understanding the situation of the media in new democracies, since all autocratic regimes use the media for their own purposes and as an instrument to stabilise the political order the transition to a media systems that operates independently from the state is bound to trigger conflicts between political power holders and the media;
- c. political parallelism - refers, in its broadest sense, to the relationship between the media and their societal environment;
- d. professionalisation - refers to journalistic practices; and
- e. self-perception and how this is reflected in the quality of political coverage.

#### **b) Socio-cultural values**

There are many definitions of culture. According to Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952 cited in Oliver and Kandadi (2006), culture refers to the patterns of human groups “acquired and

transmitted by symbol” (p.180). The essential core of culture consists of “traditional ideas and especially their attached values” (p.180). Terpstra and David (1985) defined culture as:

*“Culture is a learned, shared, compelling, interrelated set of symbols whose meaning provides a set of orientations for members of a society. These orientations, taken together, provide solutions to problems that all societies must solve if they are to remain viable.”*

Hofstede (1980; 1994; 1997) defines culture as the collective programming of the mind that differentiates members of one group from other groups, and says that culture is learnt and cannot be inherited. It calls for compliance with certain values, rules and practices in a society and consequently, influences the ability of humans to feel, learn and communicate. He points out that cultures are built on values and values create the collective programming. Collective programming means that people share similar patterns of thinking, feeling, acting, and reacting. Thus, people from another culture may see and react to the same event in a very different way. In a study of IBM employees from around the world, Hofstede (1980) found four dimensions of societal culture: power distance, individualism or collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity or femininity.

The *cultural dimensions theory* introduced by Hofstede’s research on national culture focused on IBM employees from over 70 countries around the world with a sample size of over a hundred thousand (Hofstede, 2001). The findings of the study identified five dimensions of national culture which represent the mainstream attitude, expectations, values and behaviours. These are:

- a. *Power distance* (categorised as either large or small): this measure refers to the extent to which a society accepts the unequal power distribution within or between institutions and firms. It is related to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality or differences in power and wealth by different societies.
- b. *Uncertainty avoidance* (categorised as high or low): relates to the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future. In countries with strong uncertainty avoidance, people tend to be active, aggressive, emotional, compulsive, security-seeking, and intolerant whereas people in weak uncertainty avoidance countries tend to be easy-going, indolent, controlled, less aggressive, unemotional, relaxed, accepting of personal risks, and relatively tolerant.
- c. *Individualism versus collectivism* (categorised as high or low): relates to the integration of individuals into primary groups. In countries with high individualism, the relationships between individuals are loose and people are expected to look after themselves and their immediate families. In low individualism (or collectivism) countries, the relationships between people in the same family mean that these people are integrated into strong and cohesive groups that last a lifetime. Family members protect each other in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.
- d. *Masculinity versus femininity* (categorised as strong or weak): relates to the division of emotional roles between men and women and the expected gender roles in a society. Strong masculinity cultures have very distinct expectations of men and women in the society. Men tend to be assertive, ambitious, tough, competitive, and focus on material success, while women tend to be tender, more modest, and concerned with quality of life. Thus, to the extent that a culture is feminine, the values of human relationships and concern for others are high, while, on the other hand, masculine cultures are more assertive and value materialism.

- e. *Long-term versus short-term orientation* (Confucian dynamism): relates to the choice of focus of people's efforts: the future or the present. This dimension was added later and focuses on the differences between East Asian countries and the rest of the world. It was derived from the teachings of Confucius and accounts for the relationship between an individual's work ethic and his/her respect for tradition. Cultures with high Confucian dynamism value persistence and perseverance, status-oriented relationships, thrift and a conscious sense of shame. They attribute more importance to respect for tradition, protecting one's face and the reciprocation of gifts, greetings or favours than personal steadiness and stability (Hofstede, 2001).

According to Hofstede (1980), these five dimensions represent the basic elements of common structure in the cultural systems of the countries. Thus, they provide an important framework not only for analysing national culture, but also for considering the effects of cultural differences on management and organisations. This framework is especially useful for understanding people's conceptions of an organisation, the mechanisms that are considered appropriate in controlling and coordinating the activities within it, and the roles and relations of its members (Hoecklin, 1996).

In addition, Edward T. Hall (1976) proposed the concept of high versus low context as a way of understanding different cultural orientations. The difference between high and low context cultures depends on how much meaning is found in the 'context' versus the 'code'. The code is interpreted as message and context as setting or circumstance, including the people, in which the message appeared. More specifically, context leads to differences in how and what people communicate.

In Hall's view, a high context culture is one in which people are deeply involved with each other. As a result of intimate relationships among people, a structure of social hierarchy exists; individual inner feelings are kept under strong self-control, and information is widely shared through simple messages with deep meaning. A low-context culture is one in which "people are highly individualised, somewhat alienated, and fragmented, and there is relatively little involvement with others" (Hall, 1976, p.39). As a consequence, social hierarchy, as well as society in general, imposes less on individuals' lives, and communication between people is more explicit and impersonal.

Furthermore, Hall (1975 cited in Walker, et al., 2003) made a distinction between cultures characterised as 'low context' and 'high context'. The characteristics of high context cultures are much covert and implicit messaging, internalised messages, much non-verbal coding, reserved reactions, distinct in-group and out-group categorisation, strong people bonds, high commitment, and open and flexible time. Generally high context cultures are characterised by establishment of social trust first, personal relations and goodwill are valued, agreements emphasise trust, and negotiations are slow and ritualistic.

In contrast, low context cultures are characterised by much overt and explicit messaging, plainly coded messages, verbalised details, reactions on the surface, flexible in-group and out-group categorisation, fragile people bonds, low commitment, and highly organised time. Generally, get down to business first, expertise and performance are valued, agreements emphasise specific, legalistic contracts, and negotiations are as efficient as possible.

The low-context countries tend to be in northern Europe and North America, which have a long tradition of rhetoric, placing central importance on the delivery of verbal messages. The primary function of speech in such cultures is to express one's ideas and thoughts as clearly, logically, and convincingly as possible. Communication is direct and explicit, and meaning is straightforward. By contrast, high-context cultures such as Middle Eastern and East Asian cultures where people emphasise nonverbal messages and view communication as a means to promote smooth, harmonious relationships, prefer an indirect and polite face-saving style that emphasises a mutual sense of care and respect for others.



Figure (2) - The characteristics of high context and low context<sup>18</sup>

In high-context cultures personal relations are highly valued, establishing social trust and goodwill first is very important. Negotiations are slow and ritualistic. High-context cultures also tend to require a great deal of contextual information before business can be transacted. Business is personal and high-context communicators prefer opportunities for face-to-face meetings or any other way that favours a more complete contextual reading of a situation.

<sup>18</sup> - Available from: The Cultural Environment of International Business.  
<http://www.prenhall.com/divisions/bp/app/fred/Catalog/0131738607/pdf/Ch.%205%20revised.pdf>.  
 [Accessed 15 February 2011]

### **c) Economy system**

The economic system and level of development of a country provide different opportunities and challenges to a public relations practitioner. In a market economy, there is a reciprocal relationship between economic development and the development of the media. With greater economic development, the role of the media grows. The media too, can stimulate the capacity of a society to improve its economic situation, and to progress, but there are certain safeguards that need to be in place. In a state-controlled economy or centrally-planned economy, the media is centrally controlled, and in the hands of a few. This is also the case in a free-market economy, which has a tendency towards monopoly ownership of the media, and thus, a control over the content of the media. The level of development also provides the infrastructure for practicing public relations. Obviously, more developed economic systems make it easier for public opinion polls to be conducted, for example. Understanding publics in developing economies poses different challenges and requires different sets of public relations strategies and practices (Sriramesh, 2009).

### **d) Media infrastructure and practice**

In their classical typology Siebert, et al. (1963 cited in Hafez, 2010) divided the world mainly into democratic and authoritarian media systems. They distinguish more precisely between authoritarian, libertarian, Soviet and social responsibility theories of the press. Democratic systems, they argued, allow freedom of opinion while authoritarian systems do not. Democratic systems develop a public sphere while authoritarian systems introduce censorship. Democratic systems develop a communicative link between government and the

people as a means of legitimising power between elections while authoritarian systems exert arbitrary power; they propagate rather than deliberate.

Beside the media freedom, freedom of expression is often regarded as an integral concept in modern liberal democracies where it is understood to outlaw censorship. The terms ‘freedom of expression’ and ‘communication’ encompass a wide range of human activities that involve seeking, receiving and imparting information and ideas, ranging from cultural expression to political speech (Horner, 2006). Freedom of opinion and expression is one of the fundamental civil and political rights enshrined in international Human Rights law. It is clearly stated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that:<sup>19</sup>

*“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”*

Also, the right to freedom of expression is guaranteed in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):

*“Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.”*

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<sup>19</sup> - UN Human Rights Committee report on freedom of expression. Available from: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/GC34.pdf>. [Accessed June 17 2010]



Media freedom is a matter of concern, as is media structure and ownership. It is acknowledged that in a state-controlled economy or centrally-planned economy, the media is centrally controlled, and in the hands of a few. This is also the case in a free-market economy, which has a tendency towards monopoly ownership of the media, and thus, a control over the content of the media. Trends towards the increasing concentration of media ownership by a smaller number of media corporations are evident in most regions of the world (Curran, 2002).

Diversity of media ownership is considered crucial to ensuring diversity of news information. As a federal circuit court of the US noted in 2004, “diversification of media ownership serves the public interest by promoting diversity of programme and service viewpoints as well as by preventing undue concentration of economic power”. Various media competition laws and regulations are widely accepted in connection with a society’s significant interest in ensuring a wide range of information and opinion for citizens through pluralistic media, that is, media cross-ownership is a matter of freedom of expression as a right.

However, it is important to note that commentators and actors within the field of media regulation often hold views that fall between two main extremes of opinion: those who consider that any intervention within media markets is distortional and that market forces are the best means of achieving a competitive media sector that fosters freedom of expression, and those who believe that government regulation is necessary to promote diversity in media content and prevent its manipulation according to state and private interests (Horner, 2006). Besides removing governmental restraints, William Hachten (2005) maintains that the role of freedom of the press is something more. He defines the freedom of the press as “the right of the press to report, to comment on, and to criticise its own government without retaliation or

threat of retaliation from the authority,” which he calls “the right to talk politics” (Hachten, 2005, p.32).

After identifying the impact of the environmental variables on public relations practice, the next part of this chapter is exploring the political and socio-economic environment that might influence public relations practice in the Middle Eastern Arab countries.

### **5.3. Public relations and external environment in the Middle Eastern Arab countries\*<sup>20</sup>**

While the use of the term ‘Middle East’, remains unsettled, and some agencies and bodies of the United Nations still employ the term Near East, the term ‘Middle East’ is still preferred by political and economic analysts, although it does not have very clearly defined geographical borders. The *World Atlas* defines the Middle East by saying, “the region which includes the countries of the modern Middle East are all part of Asia: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Palestinian territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen”.<sup>21</sup>

The *USA Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)* defines the Middle East region as the geographical area that includes: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Gaza Strip and West Bank (Palestinian territories), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Armenia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey.<sup>22</sup> In the present research the term Middle East will be limited to the following Arab

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<sup>20</sup> - Part of this text was published by the author: Abdelhay. Nawaf (2012) The Arab uprising 2011: new media in the hands of a new generation in North Africa. *Aslib Proceedings*, Vol. 64 Iss: 5 pp. 529 – 539.

<sup>21</sup> - [www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/me.htm](http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/me.htm)

<sup>22</sup> - [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region\\_mde.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region_mde.html).

countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Palestinian territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

#### **a. Political environment in the Arab Middle Eastern countries**

Whilst effective public relations need democracy, political participation, a high level of transparency and respect of public opinion in society (Kirat, 2005a), most Arab countries are still lacking democratic governments, freedom of expression, individual freedoms, effective civil societies, active public opinion, and strong economies, thus inducing a negative impact on professional and systematic practice of public relations (Kirat, 2005a).

The term Arab is associated with a particular region of the world. Kimball (1984) considers the Arab world to be included in the Middle East, which is further encompassed by the worldwide Islamic community. While Arab countries are considered Middle Eastern, not all Middle Eastern countries are Arab. And while approximately 85-90% of the Arab population is Muslim, only around 20% of the world's Muslims are Arabs (Kimball, 1984 cited in Feghali, 1997).

Almost all of the people in the region extending from the Atlantic coast of Northern Africa to the Arabian Gulf call themselves Arabs. The classification is based largely on common language (Arabic) and a shared sense of geographical, historical, and cultural identity. There are 10 Arab countries in Africa: Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Egypt, and 12 countries in Asia: Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and 'the

people of Palestine' (Palestinians are presently either living under Israeli rule, autonomy of partial Palestinian authority, or dispersed throughout the world).

The region offers a range of forms of political regimes mainly at the authoritarian and non-participatory end of the spectrum. But it also reveals different modalities of political decision-making and of repression, media censorship and control of the Internet (Sreberny, 2008). Long-lived undemocratic political regimes are prevalent in the Arab world (Noland, 2008). Noland (2008) asserted that "no other region experienced fewer regime changes on average for the period 1960-2003 than did the Arab Middle". Those Long-lasting political regimes had used the revenues brought them by huge oil and gas assets to maintain paternalistic forms of government in which the values of liberty and human rights were subordinated.

Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies' annual report on Civil Society and Democratisation in the Arab World 2010 (Zaki, 2010), introduced a detailed map showing the political scene in the Arab countries up to the end of 2010. The report drew the following observations:

- 1. Political regimes vary in the degree to which they enable voters to participate meaningfully in the system. At the antidemocratic extreme of the spectrum are the kind of inherited monarchies that wield absolute unchecked executive power which dominates all aspects of the system (this applies to all the Gulf States). Not much better are the republican systems.*
- 2. Human rights institutions in the Arab countries though mostly weak are also currently under attack by the incumbent autocratic regimes.*

3. *The general trend is that while practically all the authoritarian regimes of the Arab world are promoting market oriented economic freedom they keep a close lid on political opposition, human rights organisations , advocates of good governance, and groups seeking to promote the rights of women, minority groups, and trade unions.*
4. *In such a climate authoritarian regimes are generally loath to open up their systems, and some made use of this environment to consolidate their power further by suppressing all opposition and increasing their stranglehold on civil society.*

Recent developments in Arab countries, particularly in the North African countries of Tunisia and Egypt, have shown that new communication channels (mobile phones, social networks) have facilitated the ‘organisation’ of civil society by allowing a timely exchange of opinions and ideas. Tunisian and Egyptian protesters have turned to online social media such as Facebook and Twitter to mobilise pro-democracy social movements and start a revolution, illustrating how, in today’s digital era, the Internet has become a key alternative media tool for activism (Kenix, 2009). The rise of social-networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and others has encouraged their users to communicate and interact in new ways that potentially disrupt existing media and even social structures. Jenkins (2006) calls this the rise of “participatory culture” in which ordinary people can create their own content and distribute it via social networks. Such changes may reflect what Castells (2007) argues is the emergence of “mass self- communication”, which can be a new means for social movements and activists to exercise and create new forms of power.

Shirky (2008) argues that today it is easier than ever to form these kinds of groups using online communication resources to engage in non-hierarchical and participatory group actions. According to Monroe Price (director of the Center for Global Communication

Studies, University of Pennsylvania), “we will have new models of politics, new concepts of involvement, new technologies that create these changes, and we may have huge tension in our societies” (cited in Fitri, 2011, p.4).

#### **b. Media environment in the Arab Middle Eastern countries**

As a simple overview of the political regimes once present in some Arab countries, it can be said that these regimes almost always attempted to restrict and control the media in their favour. The governments of some Arab countries express concern when making information available on the Internet, accessible to people in their country.

This means they have control over what people can see. Through this, they portray an image of wellbeing and a high quality lifestyle, which would never encourage a revolution. Long-lived undemocratic political regimes are ubiquitous in the Arab world. These political regimes used the assets brought to them by huge oil and gas assets to maintain a paternalistic form of government in which the values of liberty and human rights were subordinated. Moreover, freedom of expression remains an important issue defining both the structure and form of media in the Arab world. As in other parts of the world, freedom of expression is part of the political, social, cultural and economic environments. Civil societies consider freedom of the press as one of the basic rights of an open, free and democratic society. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948, Article 19) indicates that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers”.

All constitutions, even Arab ones, recognise the right to communicate and preserve freedom of the press. But the reality of the situation is, as in all other places, that all expressions are restricted by ancillary law and practice. Thus, media in the Arabic world often finds itself either bound to the regime, or walking a tightrope and highly dependent upon largely autocratic governments (Johnston, 1998; Taweela, 2002; Quinn, et al., 2004). According to the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies' annual report on Civil Society and Democratisation in the Arab World 2010, All Arab countries continue to criminalise press offences - where offences are interpreted expansively.

In 1996, the launch of the Qatar-based channel Al-Jazeera changed the media landscape and brought about a small revolution in the region. This news channel has opened a new era in many countries of the region for independent news coverage and a new sense of freedom. By airing highly controversial political debates, using a provocative tone and addressing sensitive social, economic and political issues – something unheard of until then – it has successfully attracted the attention of millions of viewers in the region and in the world. Its attempt to provide objective, reliable and professional news coverage outside the influence of governments and outside a Western cultural framework has won the respect of many media experts. Since 2001 Al-Jazeera has been recognised by Western media and policy makers as an important factor in the world media landscape.

In the last ten years, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt have established media cities in the hope that knowledge-based industries will push their economies forward. Jordan was the first nation in the region to raise the idea of creating a free media zone (Sullivan, 2001a). Jordan Media City (JMC) was built in 1978 and started functioning in 2001. Dubai Media City (DMC) opened officially in January 2001. The Egyptian Media Production City

(EMPC) was opened officially in June 2002. The spread of these new technologies in the Arab region has inevitably caused the birth of dozens of new television channels with new messages and information for a new Arab audience.

Transnational satellite broadcasting significantly reinforced pan-Arab identity. During the second half of the 1990s, this huge process of new technologies of transmission increased the debate between people, scholars and associations about the principle of the freedom of the press and the promotion of an independent, free and pluralistic Arab media. Another side of this is that local regimes could no longer imprint their so-called 'national values' upon their subjects. The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies organised a major conference on the media in North Africa in 2007. Amongst the conclusions were:

- *The Arab world in its entirety has been impervious to the waves of democratic dissemination and transformation experienced by other parts in the world. The despotic regimes ruling the Arab world still make frequent use of freedom-curbing tools, in spite of all international pressures and internal demands/pressures for democratic reform (UNECA, 2007, pp.2-3).*
- *All Arab countries still retain absolute control over radio and television broadcasting, especially land broadcasting. The states also control the powers of granting licenses to establish satellite transmission corporations or stations, in addition to the censorship of all that is transmitted (UNECA, 2007, p.6).*
- *Those countries also seek to restrict the flow of information through several means of technology, by using various forms of web content control. In some countries, there are increasing concerns that e-mails are subject to control, especially in Tunisia. Also, a number of Internet sites are blocked in Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt.*



*Furthermore, many bloggers who have been rather active in recent years are increasingly prosecuted. Those bloggers have played significant roles, either in disclosing human rights violations, or the media coverage of several proceedings and forms of political and community movements (UNECA, 2007, p.7).*

Despite all government strategies and efforts to have, and maintain control of the mass media, and even social media in their countries, it seems even they were surprised by recent events leading up to the shift of control from people in power to the power of the people, and consequently the Arab uprising of 2011.

Social media and especially social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter were largely responsible for the organisation of anti-regime protests and riots across the Arab world. The number of Internet users in the Arab world is likely to continue to rise, especially with the introduction of technologies that overcome poor ICT infrastructure that hinders Internet access in the region. Demographic factors are also expected to contribute to the growth of the Internet population. According to the Arab Media Outlook 2008-2012 (2009), digital media will thrive because the Arab market has a large, technologically accomplished demographic group - young people - who are comfortable with it, and will customise it to their own requirements. Text messaging, blogs, photo-sharing sites and social networking sites are increasingly popular in the Middle East as Internet connectivity rates improve and mobile technologies bypass the need for Internet access. The 2010 MENA Facebook Digest analyses the usage of Facebook in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and provides the following key findings (Alidina, 2010):

- *The MENA region is home to approximately a 10th of the world's Facebook users. Currently, the region has over 40 million Facebook users, representing a market penetration of 11.5 percent.*
- *In April 2010, 1.64 million people in MENA joined Facebook. This represents a one-month growth rate of 4.3 percent.*
- *While the majority of MENA users browse Facebook in English, more than 3.6 million users browse in Arabic, representing 9.1 percent of the overall MENA Facebook user base.*
- *More than 26 million Facebook users in MENA are between the ages of 18 and 34.*
- *Out of 17 million Internet users in Egypt, approximately 4 million use Facebook. In Tunisia, 15.8 percent of 3.6 million Internet users, corresponding to 1.67 million people, have Facebook accounts.*

These new technologies, communication tools, and social networks played fundamental roles in the 2011 uprising in North Africa. First, and most importantly, they have given the public the courage and permission to cross this once tall wall of fear, built by the government; whereby, if you openly opposed a government regime you would inevitably have to face harsh consequences. Second, the Internet has served as a means to spread information and challenge government-imposed media controls, providing the activists with new means and tools to use when organising demonstrations, in sending short updates to journalists, bloggers and activists, and in encouraging media coverage. Through the enormous numbers of videos and pictures that circulated every day on Facebook and Twitter, the world was not only able to learn about 'what was going on' as traditional media would have it, it was also witnessing the average man getting hold of a tool that enabled him to construct meanings and symbols

and spread them with a click, or to reach into the archives of history that have been kept for so long under the lock and key of censorship.

However, as more people use the Internet to communicate, obtain information, socialise, and conduct commerce, governments have stepped up efforts to regulate, and in some instances tightly control, the new medium. Reports of website blocking and filtering, content manipulation, attacks on and imprisonment of bloggers, and cyber-attacks have all increased sharply in recent years.<sup>23</sup>

The Middle East and North Africa is one of the most heavily censored regions in the world. Human rights watchdogs and free speech advocacy groups continue to criticise the media restrictions and repressive legal regimes, and over the past few years, a great number of bloggers and cyber-dissidents have been jailed.<sup>24</sup>

A report titled ‘Internet filtering in the Middle East and North Africa’ released by OpenNet Initiative and edited by Noman (2009) has highlighted the following concerns over Internet censorship and filtering in Arab countries:

- *Governments in the Middle East and North Africa continue to invest in media and IT projects, and at the same time are continuing to invest in censorship technologies to prevent their citizens from accessing a wide range of objectionable content.*

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<sup>23</sup> -Toward New Mass Communication: Obstacles and Challenges facing the Media in North Africa. January 13 – 14, 2007, Cairo. Available from: <http://www.cihrs.org/English/NewsSystem/Articles/324.aspx> . [Accessed 25 April 2011]

<sup>24</sup> -Toward New Mass Communication: Obstacles and Challenges facing the Media in North Africa. January 13– 14, 2007, Cairo. Available from: <http://www.cihrs.org/English/NewsSystem/Articles/324.aspx> . [Accessed 25 April 2011]

- *The censors in the region attempt to control political content using technical filtering, laws and regulations, surveillance and monitoring, physical restrictions, and extra-legal harassment and arrests.*
- *Many ISPs block popular politically neutral online services such as online translation services and privacy tools fearing that they can be used to bypass the filtering regimes. The censors also overblock websites and services such as social networking websites and photo and video sharing websites because of the potential for content considered objectionable.*
- *More users in the Middle East and North Africa are using the Internet for political campaigning and social activism.*

In an attempt to face such an unacceptable environment, the International Federation of Journalists in April 2009 called for a radical overhaul of media laws in the Middle East, stating that the laws in most of the region's countries still permit the jailing of journalists for undermining the reputation of the state, the president, the monarch or the religion. Such laws have often been used to suppress reporting of corruption or scrutiny of government actions.<sup>25</sup>

### **c. Socio-cultural environment in the Arab Middle Eastern countries**

No doubt, the literature portrays Islam as the dominant characteristic of Arab culture and society. For example, Touma (1998) wrote:

*“The essence of Arabian culture is wrapped up in the Arabic language..., Islam..., tradition. And thus an Arab, in the modern sense of the word, is one*

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<sup>25</sup> - Internet Filtering in the Middle East and North Africa. OpenNet Initiative. Available from: <http://opennet.net/research/regions/mena>. [Accessed in 17th March 2011]

*who is a national of an Arab state, has command of the Arabic language, and possesses a fundamental knowledge of Arabian tradition, that is, of the manners, customs, and political and social systems of the culture” (cited in Wunderle, 2006).*

Nevertheless, the Middle East is the geographic origin of three of the world’s major religions – Islam, Judaism and Christianity. The majority of the people in the Middle East practice Islam, but Judaism and Christianity, although minor in comparison to Islam, are also practised (Sreberny, 2008).

In the Middle East religion plays a crucial symbiotic role in the individual's and community's life. The socio-cultural and historic environment that saw the birth and spread of the world’s major religions encouraged a close relationship between the private and public in the individual's life in the Middle East. Moreover, within Arabic countries live other minority groups as well. Thus there may be found social and familial mixing with other groups such as Persians, Turks, Kurds, Berbers, and other minorities (Sreberny, 2008). Many people in the Middle East adhere to Islamic principles and practice traditional rituals on a daily basis. Islam is a way of life and governs politics, moral values and various aspects of behaviour such as economic and other policy and law making. Islam also guides food and drink consumption, clothing patterns, financial sector activities and products, and most of the population’s world view (Irani, 1999). The primary source for Muslim behaviour and beliefs is the Koran, the holy book of Islam, which is complemented by the Prophet Mohammed’s sayings recorded by historians or hadith, and a large body of Islamic jurisprudence and scholarly analysis. Sharia, or traditional Islamic law, underpins the legal systems of all Arab states.

Barakat (1993) cited in Hill, et al. (1998) delineates a number of features of Arab culture and society. His synthesis includes the following social characteristics:

- *pyramidal class structure based on communal cleavages, socioeconomic structures, and lack of political power;*
- *social complementarity, i.e., the 'likeness' of Arab people, including the family, social class structure, religion, political behaviour, patterns of living;*
- *transition and the Arab renaissance, i.e., the perpetual change that has always been characteristic of Arab society;*
- *patriarchal relations, particularly in the family, which has been the basic economic and social unit for all three Arab patterns of living - Bedouin, rural, and urban;*
- *primary group relations;*
- *spontaneity and expressiveness in social interactions;*
- *alienation and the lack of civil society for the masses;*
- *continuing dependency and underdevelopment, which increases disparities between the rich and poor, creates marginal ruling families and classes, and a distorted development directed toward consumption rather than production (cited in Hill, et al., 1998).*

Other scholars have addressed an array of values considered prevalent in Arab societies. The basic values most commonly mentioned include (a) collectivism, (b) hospitality, and (c) honour. The influence of Bedouin values remains strong, despite the fact that around 90% of the population in the region presently resides in villages or cities (Patai, 1983 cited in Feghali, 1997). The culture features loyalty, dignity (Nydell, 1987 cited in Feghali, 1997), generosity, courage, self-respect (Patai, 1983 cited in Feghali, 1997), pride, rivalry and

revenge. Traditionally, the peoples of the Arab Middle East remain famous for their loyal attachment to their families, distinctive rituals of hospitality and conflict mediation, and effective and flexible kin-based collectivities, such as the lineage and the tribe, which until quite recently performed most of the social, economic, and political functions of communities in the absence of centralised state governments. Hospitality is a key characteristic of Arab society and culture. Hospitality or 'diyafa' dates to pre-Islamic times and emerged as a coping mechanism in the desert environment, where individuals were utterly dependent on the assistance of others during travel or for protection from avengers or oppressors (Feghali, 1997). Generosity to guests and Hospitality therefore, is an integral part of business relationships (Williams, 1998). In societies where interdependence rather than individual autonomy is stressed, behaviours which enhance social relations are crucial.

Hofstede (1983) examined a group of Arab states (Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and UAE) with regard to the four cultural dimensions. The study categorised the Arab countries as a high power distance countries with a *power distance Index* (PDI) of 80, which means that people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. Hierarchy in an organisation is seen as reflecting inherent inequalities, centralisation is popular, subordinates expect to be told what to do and the ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat.

According to Hofstede (1983), the Arab culture, with a score of 38 on the *individualism/collectivism* dimension is considered a collectivistic society. This is manifest in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group', be that family, extended family, or extended relationships. Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount, and over-rides most other societal rules and regulations. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone

takes responsibility for fellow members of their group. In collectivist societies offence leads to shame and loss of face, employer/employee relationships are perceived in moral terms (like a family link), hiring and promotion decisions take account of the employee's in-group management.

The same study showed that the Arab world scores 52 on the *masculinity/femininity* dimension and is thus a masculine society. In masculine countries people 'live in order to work', managers are expected to be decisive and assertive, the emphasis is on equity, competition and performance, and conflicts are resolved by fighting them out. Lastly, the Arab culture scores 68 on the *uncertainty avoidance* dimension and thus has a high preference for avoiding uncertainty. Countries exhibiting high uncertainty avoidance maintain rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are intolerant of unorthodox behaviour and ideas. In these cultures there is an emotional need for rules (even if the rules never seem to work), time is money, people have an inner urge to be busy and work hard, precision and punctuality are the norm, innovation may be resisted and security is an important element in individual motivation.

Research conducted by Mohammed At-Twajri and Ibrahim Al-Muhaiza (1996) in five of the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman) found that the PDI for the five GCC countries is substantially different to the one in Hofstede's (1983) study, (80 vs. 56). Authors asserted that the difference may be attributed to the fact that between the period when Hofstede's study was conducted in the 70's and the time of their study in the 90's some social changes in the GCC countries had occurred because of the wealth that was accumulated since the mid 70's. (e.g. almost all GCC countries have recently established Al-Shura Council (consultative assemblies), this shows how the



GCC countries were moving towards decentralising decision making and therefore, reducing the power distance condition) (At-Twajjri and Al-Muhaiza, 1996).

The uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) for the Gulf was 91 in AT-Twajjri and Al-Muhaiza (1996), which is significantly higher than Hofstede (1983) when the UAI was 68 for the Arab group. At-Twajjri and Al-Muhaiza attribute that to the increase of wealth in the hands of the people of the GCC countries, and the fear of losing this wealth, which has also increased.



Figure (3): Index reported by Hofstede (1983) for the Arab countries.<sup>26</sup>

The individualism vs. collectivism Index (IDV) was 38 in At-Twajjri and Al-Muhaiza's (1996) study, which is the same index reported by Hofstede (1983) for the Arab countries in his study. The masculinity vs. femininity Index (MAS) for Arab countries scored at midpoint (52) in Hofstede's study and 45 in At-Twajjri and Al-Muhaiza's (1996) study.

<sup>26</sup> - Available from: <http://geert-hofstede.com/arab-world-egiqkwlblysa.html>. [Accessed 17 April 2011]. No scores available for the Arab world on the long term orientation (LTO) dimension as it is closely related to the teachings of Confucius and can be interpreted as dealing with society's search for virtue, the extent to which a society shows a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historical short-term point of view.

After identifying the impact of the environmental variables on public relations practice in the Middle Eastern Arab countries, the next part of this chapter is focused on the political and socioeconomic environment that might influence public relations practice in KSA and UAE.

#### **5.4. Political and socio-cultural environment in KSA**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula. It occupies an area about the size of the United States east of the Mississippi River. Saudi Arabia's population is 27 million, including 8.4 million foreign residents (2010 census), and its capital city is Riyadh.

##### **a. Political and economy system**

Saudi Arabia's geography is diverse, with forests, grasslands, mountain ranges and deserts. The climate varies from region to region. Temperatures can reach over 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the desert in the summer, while in the winter, temperatures in the north and central parts of the country can drop below freezing. Saudi Arabia gets very little rain, only about four inches a year on average. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a monarchy with a political system rooted in Islamic Sharia law. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has monarchy based governance ruled by the sons and grandsons of the first king Abd Al Aziz Al Saud. This implies that it is a hereditary monarchy. Saudi Arabia has no formal constitution; however, by Royal Decree in 1992, the King implemented the Basic Law of Governance. To the extent that the Basic Law can be considered an 'informal' constitution, Article (1) establishes the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Mohammed as the 'formal' constitution. Saudi Arabia has no tradition of peaceful political protest or indeed political

organisation beyond the tribal unit. There is no civil society; no professional unions or organisations exist.

In 2003 the government permitted the first ever recognised civil associations: an organisation for Saudi journalists and a human rights organisation. Since then, the government has licensed a large number of humanitarian organisations, and tribal and professional societies (e.g. The Saudi Pharmacist Society). Professional ‘groups’ cannot be formed without prior permission. Political parties and trade unions are totally prohibited; however, labour committees have been allowed but are empowered only to issue recommendations.

In December 2005, the first governmental human rights organisation, the National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) was established; its declared goal was to highlight major areas of human rights abuses. Human rights activists, however, set little store by this new organisation, which they believe was created only to co-opt any nascent civil society associations that may arise, rather than to promote respect for human rights. Demonstrations and overt activism is prohibited. Those who stage demonstrations or engage in civic or political advocacy are likely to be promptly arrested. Academic freedoms are severely restricted.

Saudi Arabia has an oil-based economy with strong government controls over major economic activities. It possesses about 20% of the world's proven petroleum reserves, ranks as the largest exporter of petroleum, and plays a leading role in OPEC. The petroleum sector accounts for roughly 80% of budget revenues.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> - Information available from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sa.html>. [Accessed 25 April 2011]

The development of the Saudi Arabian economy has gone hand in hand with the establishment and expansion of the Saudi state during the last fifty years. The Kingdom directs its major effort to the development of gas and petrochemicals sectors. Saudi Aramco, the world's largest fully integrated oil company, is projecting expenditure of \$129 billion throughout its current five year plan (2009-2014). The other largest Saudi company SABIC have announced a capital programme of \$21 billion, to increase annual production from 48 million tonnes per annum to 60 million. SABIC is aiming for 100 million tonnes by 2015.<sup>28</sup> Almost 8 million foreign workers play an important role in the Saudi economy, particularly in the oil and service sectors. As part of its effort to attract foreign investment, Saudi Arabia acceded to the WTO in December 2005 after many years of negotiations.

#### **b. Media and freedom of expression**

The terms 'free media' and 'freedom of expression' have always been vague in Saudi Arabia, and linked to the observance of Islamic principles. Article 39 of the Basic Law states that "media, publishing, and all means of expression shall commit to good words and state regulations... They shall contribute to: educating the nation, supporting its unity, and prohibiting anything that would lead to discord, sedition, division, or prejudice the security of the state and its public relations, or cause harm to human dignity and rights". (Al -Turaiqi, 2008)

There are ten daily newspapers currently printed in Saudi Arabia: eight in Arabic and two in English. One of the Arabic newspapers is owned by the government, while the rest are privately owned, as are the two English-language papers. Newspapers and magazines can be

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<sup>28</sup> - Information available from: [www.osec.ch](http://www.osec.ch). [Accessed 25 April 2011]

established only by a decree from the King who also appoints and removes the editors-in-chief. The government owns all domestic broadcast media, and closely monitors the press and all publications. Foreign papers are severely censored and heavy restrictions are placed on the entry of foreign journalists into the Kingdom.

Saudi law does not allow any private television channels inside the country. Many private channels aimed at Saudi viewers have been established outside the country, including Alarabiya, MBC, and ORBET. In 2010, Saudi Arabia made five licenses available for private radio broadcasters. The licenses were granted by an auction which raised funds for the Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information (MOCI). The Saudi authorities' plan includes provision for an expected total of 80 towers to provide full national coverage. The new radio stations will reach an anticipated audience of around 25 million people.<sup>29</sup>

Internet connection has been available in Saudi Arabia since 1994 but access was initially restricted to state academic, medical, and research institutions. Saudi citizens and residents with computers, modems and money were able to launch web sites. Internet access is filtered to block web sites that may be considered offensive to Islam or the Royal Family. In May 1998, the Council of Ministers made public its Decision 163, which provides examples of the prohibited uses of the Internet. These include:

*“Using the network for illegitimate purposes such as, for example, pornography and gambling; carrying out any activities violating the social, cultural, political, media, economic, and religious values of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; sending or receiving coded information unless after obtaining*

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<sup>29</sup> - Information available from: [http://www.newtec.eu/uploads/media/Newtec-PressRelease\\_MENOS-PrivateFM\\_ASBU\\_DeltaCompany\\_2010-09-12.pdf](http://www.newtec.eu/uploads/media/Newtec-PressRelease_MENOS-PrivateFM_ASBU_DeltaCompany_2010-09-12.pdf). [ Accessed 10 July 2011]

*the necessary licenses from the administration of the network in question; [and] introducing others into the usage accounts or briefing them on the secret number of the user.”*<sup>30</sup>

On February 12, 2001, the Council of Ministers issued a resolution further codifying the restrictions on the use of the Internet. It openly acknowledges that the censorship includes political sites and information. In April 2011, Freedom House released its report on Internet freedom in 37 countries around the world. The report highlights the increase in the number of blocked and filtered sites as well as the arrest of bloggers and Internet users posting information contrary to the government’s views.<sup>31</sup> It also notes the fact that a large number of governments, such as Saudi Arabia, have deliberately blocked access to information related to politics, social issues, and human rights. In 2009, Saudi Arabia is ranked by Freedom House as ‘*not free*’ in both political rights and civil liberties, and its country ranking in press freedom has sunk, from 161 to 163.<sup>32</sup>

### **c. Society and culture**

Saudi Arabia’s most significant cultural and societal force has come as a result of the influence of Islam. Because Islam is so prevalent in Saudi Arabia, it pervades almost every aspect of life; laws, education, food, clothes, daily routines and even conversations are all

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<sup>30</sup> - “The Internet in the Mideast and North Africa: Free Expression and Censorship, Saudi Arabia,” Human Rights Watch, 1999. Available from: <http://www.hrw.org/advocacy/internet/mena/saudi.htm>. [ Accessed 10 July 2011]

<sup>31</sup> - Information available from: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fotn/2011/FOTN2011.pdf>. [Accessed 10 July 2011]

<sup>32</sup> - Information available from: <http://pomed.org/blog/2011/04/freedom-house-releases-internet-freedom-report.html/>. [Accessed 10 July 2011]

strongly influenced by Islam. At the same time, Saudi Arabian culture has centred on tribal or nomadic life.

In the 1950s, it was estimated that at least 50% of the population was nomadic or semi-nomadic. Tribes tended to focus on farming and trade while the nomads focused on animal husbandry. The family and tribe are highly influential and play a role in shaping a person's values and behaviour. It serves to support its members both financially and emotionally and as such, the family comes before anything else and its honour is protected by doing whatever necessary. By the 1960s, oil production and export supplied the government with over 80% of its income. This immense surge in income has changed the culture in Saudi Arabia dramatically.

Saudi Arabia is considered a very high context culture. This means that the message people are trying to convey often relies heavily on other communicative methods such as body language and eye-contact rather than direct words. In this respect, people make assumptions about what is not said. In Saudi Arabian culture particular emphasis is placed on tone of voice, the use of silence, and body language. Dignity and respect are key elements in Saudi Arabian culture and saving face, through the use of compromise, patience and self-control are means by which to maintain these qualities. Arabian culture utilises the concept of face to solve conflicts and avoid embarrassing or discomforting others.

According to Hofstede, Saudi Arabia scores high on the power distance dimension (95) which means that people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. Hierarchy in an organisation is seen as reflecting

inherent inequalities, centralisation is popular, subordinates expect to be told what to do and the ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat.

Saudi Arabia, with a score of 25 is considered a collectivistic society. This is manifest in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group', be that a family, extended family, or extended relationships. Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount, and over-rides most other societal rules and regulations. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group. In collectivist societies offence leads to shame and loss of face, employer/employee relationships are perceived in moral terms (like a family link), hiring and promotion decisions take account of the employee's in-group, and management is the management of groups.

Saudi Arabia scores 60 on the masculinity/femininity dimension and is thus a masculine society. In masculine countries people "live in order to work", managers are expected to be decisive and assertive, the emphasis is on equity, competition and performance and conflicts are resolved by fighting them out. In recent years, no sector of Saudi society has been subject to more debates and discussions than the women's sector and their role in the development process. Moreover, issues regarding women's rights and responsibilities in that development have been equally controversial among both conservatives and progressives in Saudi society. "The Basic Law of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia does not guarantee gender equality. On the contrary, gender inequality is built into Saudi Arabia's governmental and social structures, and is integral to the country's state-supported interpretation of Islam" (Dumat, n.d.). In Saudi culture, a woman's primary role is to be a nurturing mother and a loving housewife (Balaa, n.d.) and "it is difficult to even prioritise the long list of challenges facing Saudi women, which range from their political and legal disenfranchisement, to their curtailed



liberties and restraints imposed by their legal guardians” (Al Mohamed, n.d.). Women’s lack of mobility remains a salient point of contention in the Kingdom, as they still are not allowed to drive a car, they are not allowed to travel abroad by airplane without the express permission of a male guardian, and their right to travel internally without a guardian’s permission is subject to the arbitrary approval of airport personnel. When it comes to civil rights, women were not permitted to vote in Saudi Arabia’s first elections for municipal councils, yet a number of women put their names forward as candidates and expectations are high for women’s inclusion in future elections (Doumat, n.d.).

Saudi Arabia scores 80 on the uncertainty avoidance dimension and thus has a preference for avoiding uncertainty. Countries exhibiting high uncertainty avoidance maintain rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are intolerant of unorthodox behaviour and ideas. In these cultures there is an emotional need for rules, people have an inner urge to be busy and work hard, precision and punctuality are the norm, innovation may be resisted, and security is an important element in individual motivation.

## **5.5. Political and socio-cultural environment in UAE**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven emirates (Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Al Fujayrah, Sharjah, Dubai, Ra’s al-Khaymah, and Umm al-Qaywayn) previously known as the Trucial States, which was established in 1971 after the British withdrew from the Gulf.

### **a. Political and economy system**

The UAE's federal constitution stipulates that the federal president is chosen every five years, by rotation, from among the seven rulers of the emirates, yet in practice the ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan al-Nahyan, has always held that post. In 2004 Sheikh Zayed died after reigning for 37 years in which he laid a solid foundation for a stable state with a booming economy. He was succeeded by his son Sheikh Khalifa.

To ensure effective governance of the United Arab Emirates, the rulers of the seven emirates agreed to draw up a provisional constitution specifying the powers allocated to the new federal institutions. As in many federal structures around the world, certain powers remained the prerogative of each of the individual emirates, which already had their own governing institutions prior to the establishment of the Federation.

In December 2006, the UAE held its first-ever elections for 20 seats in the 40-member Federal National Council (FNC), an advisory body to the president. Only members of the electoral colleges, a group of 6,689 UAE citizens (including 1,189 women) chosen by the rulers of the emirates, were allowed to cast ballots and to stand as candidates. One woman was elected to the FNC, and the rulers of the emirates appointed seven other women as council members.

There are no political parties in the UAE. The state's 40-member Federal National Council (FNC) (Majlis al-Itihad al-Watani), composed of delegates appointed by the seven Emirs in proportion to the population of each emirate, serves as a consultative body without any legislative power. It cannot draft or reject any legislation, it can however send back bills to

the cabinet for reconsideration. The citizens of the UAE may be able to raise their demands to their rulers via associations in civil society in the regular open meetings which the rulers have with groups of citizens. The constitution provides for civil freedoms but in practice the government limits freedom of association, and the establishment of NGOs is subject to governmental approval. However, numerous unregistered NGOs are left to operate without government interference. There are about 150 NGOs registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs, whose activities cover the fields of education, culture, religion, charity, sports, arts, and women's concerns; in addition there are several associations for foreign expatriates.

The nation's first human rights association was formed in 2006, however, the government has actively discouraged the creation of other human rights organisations, and applications to establish human rights associations have been ignored. Publications by NGOs must receive prior government approval, though this restriction has not been consistently enforced.

The economy of the United Arab Emirates had depended on fishing and the pearl trade until oil was discovered in the 1950s. Since then, the UAE has invested heavily, the revenues of its oil exports into the petrochemical industry and the building of a modern economy. The rapid socio-economic developments witnessed by the State of the United Arab Emirates since the mid-seventies have led to high levels of economic growth and, hence, to an increase in income levels contributing thereby to higher living and consumption standards of both UAE nationals and foreign residents. All economic sectors, in both production and services, have recorded relatively high growth levels which contributed directly to an increase in macroeconomic growth rates. The various Emirates have also witnessed, in general, high growth rates in spite of differences in levels of development and growth from one Emirate to another due to differences in resources and socioeconomic conditions.

Since the 1990s, UAE has emerged as a major business and trading hub in the Middle East, attracting substantial foreign investments. The United Arab Emirates' economic freedom score is 67.8, making its economy the 47th freest in the 2011 Index. Its score was 0.5 points higher than in 2010, reflecting improvements particularly in freedom from corruption and monetary freedom. The UAE is ranked 6th out of 17 countries in the Middle East/North Africa region, and its overall score is higher than the world and regional averages.<sup>33</sup>

The Emirates has, since its foundation, adopted a free-economy, market-based system where demand and supply determine the main economic factors represented by prices and investment in the various economic sectors, in both production and services, and foreign and domestic trade, without any significant intervention on the part of the Government. In other words, an open economic policy was adopted, based on freedom of investment and trade in all fields, and where the private sector plays a leading role in the national economy, since the government's role is limited to formulating macroeconomic policies that reflect the overall strategy of the free economy. The economy of the Emirates is also characterised by its high reliance on incoming labour due to the shortage of the national labour force needed to carry out development projects, in both production and services, which aim at ensuring the sustainability of the overall socio-economic development process implemented by the state since its foundation.

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<sup>33</sup> - <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/UnitedArabEmirates>

## **b. Media and freedom of expression**

Permits are required for organised public gatherings, which are invariably denied if the purpose is political. Otherwise the government is tolerant of informal gatherings held even without a prior government permit unless there are complaints. Thus citizens resort to holding political discussions in majalis that are held in private homes only. Strikes and demonstrations are prohibited. Nevertheless large peaceful demonstrations do take place occasionally and are tolerated by the authorities. Trade unions are prohibited except for the UAE Chamber of Trade and Industry and the UAE Women's Federation. While unions are illegal, professional societies like the Dubai Press Club and the Engineer's Society are permitted.

Although the United Arab Emirates constitution protects freedom of speech, it is in practice strictly limited. All printed material is subject to Law No. 15 of 1988, which requires that all publications obtain prior licenses from the Ministry of Information, and subjects them to governmental review. Moreover, the law also lists a number of prohibited topics, which include material deemed pornographic, excessively violent, derogatory to Islam, supportive of certain Israeli government positions, unduly critical of friendly countries, or critical of the government or the ruling families. Consequently, journalists commonly practice self-censorship, often avoiding any comment on government statements or policies. Although the press is mostly privately owned, it obtains monetary support from the government, and is frequently used by the government to propagate its policies and publicise its achievements, usually in an exaggerated form. Foreign publications are censored. In a recent report on press freedom around the world, the UAE fell into the 'not free' category (Freedom House 2010).

New media law was introduced in 2009. The highest media organisation in the UAE, the National Media Council (NMC), says the new law provides unprecedented provisions that protect and promote freedom of expression in the country. It also says the law “provides journalists freedom from coercion to reveal sources, reflecting the government's commitment to the journalistic right to protect sources; in this particular regard, the pending law's protection exceeds that of many advanced democracies, including the United States.”<sup>34</sup> The new laws abolished prison sentences for journalists, but introduced a number of new punishable offenses and penalties for violations such as publishing content that could damage the country's reputation or economy. These include the suspension of publications, permanent revocation of publishing licenses, and fines as high as one million dirhams (\$272,250).<sup>35</sup>

The new law, passed by the Federal National Council in January 2009, was rejected by the UAE Journalists Association because, according to the association's chairman, “it has nothing to do with the concept of media; it contains 45 articles which don't provide a proper description of the media's duties and rights. Similarly, there are 10 articles which talk about penalties and punishments.” International advocacy groups have also expressed concerns over the law. Human Rights Watch (HRW) says the new law unlawfully restricts free expression and unduly interferes with the media's ability to report on sensitive subjects, and that it includes provisions that would grant the government virtually complete control in deciding who is allowed to work as a journalist, as well as which media organisations are allowed to operate in the country. HRW also says that the new law contains some improvement over the draconian media law currently in effect, but will continue to punish

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<sup>34</sup> - “UAE National Media Council welcomes all debates on draft media law,” Gulf News, April 13, 2009, <http://www.gulfnews.com/nation/Media/10303708.html>.

<sup>35</sup> - “UAE National Media Council welcomes all debates on draft media law,” Gulf News, April 13, 2009, <http://www.gulfnews.com/nation/Media/10303708.html>.

journalists for such infractions as ‘disparaging’ government officials or publishing ‘misleading’ news that ‘harms the country's economy’.<sup>36</sup> The Committee to Protect Journalists has also expressed concern over the new law in a letter they sent to the President of the UAE urging him to reject the law in its current form because, if passed, “it will negatively impact the state of press freedom in the UAE.”<sup>37</sup>

### **c. Culture and society**

The culture of the United Arab Emirates has a diverse, cosmopolitan and multicultural society. UAE is generally more liberal than its neighbour KSA. While Islam plays an important and influential role in shaping the society and culture of the UAE, Emiratis have been known for their religious tolerance. The country's cultural imprint as a small, ethnically homogenous pearling community was changed with the arrival of other ethnic groups and nationals. The UAE is built on generations of Islamic traditions which are rooted firmly in its culture and tribal heritage. Under an age-old social structure each family was traditionally bound by obligations of mutual assistance to his immediate relatives and to the tribe as a whole. Among the tribe an individual's selfless hospitality was the source of his honour and pride. Family and tribal connections form the basis of Emirati social structure. Loyalty between family and tribe members carries over into business where it is not uncommon for companies to be run by and employ several members of one family or tribe.

Hospitality is an essential part of Emirati culture and applies to both social and professional contexts. Guests will be received with enormous generosity. In the home this usually comes

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<sup>36</sup> - Human Rights Watch, “UAE: Media Law Undermines Free Expression,” April 13, 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/04/13/uae-media-law-undermines-free-expr....>

<sup>37</sup> - Committee to Protect Journalists, “CPJ concerned about UAE draft media law,” March 9, 2009, <http://cpj.org/2009/03/cpj-concerned-about-uae-draft-media-law.php>.

in the form of a feast of traditional Emirati food, especially during the holidays, while in a business context, meetings are almost always accompanied by traditional Arab coffee and pastries. The emphasis placed on hospitality is closely connected to the importance of relationships.

Women, who account for 49.3 percent of the national population, according to the 2005 census, are today at the forefront of the workforce in the UAE in both the government sector as well as a growing number in the private sector. Aided by the government's commitment to empower women and provide them with equal opportunities, the status of women within the UAE has flourished in parallel with the country's growth since the federation was established in 1971. It is evident across the UAE that women today constitute a vital part of the nation's workforce and actively contribute to the country's government and economy. Women have been very successful in getting advanced degrees, and graduates in the UAE can be found working in government, engineering, science, health care, media, computer technology, law, commerce, and the oil industry. In 2010, the United Nations Human Development Report ranked the UAE first regionally and the country holds 25th place in the world for gender empowerment.

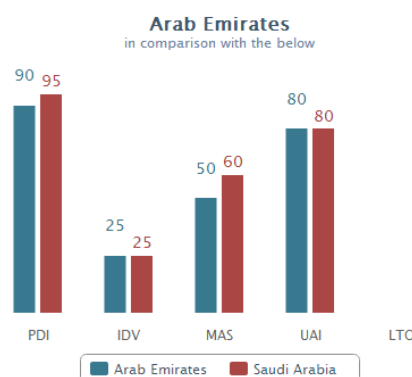


Figure (4): Hofstede's cultural dimensions means to describe the culture of KSA and UAE.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> - Available from : <http://geert-hofstede.com/arab-world-egiqkwlbllysa.html> [ Accessed 15 April 2011]



The United Arab Emirates scores high on the power distance dimension (90), and is considered a collectivistic society with a score of 25 on the individualism/collectivism dimension. On the masculinity/femininity dimension UAE scores 50 and can be considered a masculine society. Lastly, the United Arab Emirates scores 80 on the uncertainty avoidance dimension and thus has a high preference for avoiding uncertainty.

## **5.6. Conclusion:**

This chapter explored the environmental factors that influence the practices of public relations in general and specifically within two countries (KSA and UAE). Hofstede's cultural dimensions provide a detailed means to describe and compare the culture of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Both countries score high in power distance paralleling their monarchical governments. Both countries also score a low Individuality rating stemming from their family based culture and the uniting force of the Islamic religion. KSA scores high (60) in the masculinity/femininity dimension, while UAE scores medium to medium-high, due to the great influx of multinational corporations and immigrants. Finally, both countries score high in the uncertainty avoidance dimension (80). With such high uncertainty avoidance and collectivism, both KSA and UAE are geared more toward statutory control.

The purpose of this approach is to identify what socioeconomic and political environments face public relations practitioners. The contextual variables identified were the political-economic system, culture, and the media system. The theoretical framework established in this chapter makes a reasonable introduction to the main questions of this research, which are highlighted in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY**

### **6.1. Introduction**

This chapter covers an overview of the methodology used in the study. The discussion in the chapter is structured around the research design, population sampling, data collection and data analysis. There were three phases in the research process of this study: the conceptual phase was characterised by formulation of the research questions, the objectives and the purpose of the study; the second phase involved the research design and planning of the study; and the empirical phase of the research involved the actual data collection, analysis and evaluation of data.

For the purpose of this study, a combined methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) was used. Robson (2002) asserted that combining methods can deal with the researcher's perspective and participants' perspectives examine 'structural' aspects of social life and the processes of social life, help to integrate micro and macro aspects of social life and allow the researcher to decide on the appropriate methods during each stage of the research.

### **6.2. Problem for investigation**

This study evolved from one theoretical framework: the environment that aims to address the evolution and practice of public relations and business in general within specific countries. Despite the fact that the 'Excellence theory' and the majority of the models, principles and theories of public relations were born and are most frequently tested in international research

developed primarily within the socio-political and economic context of the Western capitalist democratic world (Sriramesh and Vercic, 2003; Bardhan, 2003), the majority of international studies have assumed that a normative theory can be universally applied to different international settings (Choi and Cameron, 2004:2). Therefore, studies have typically compared public relations practices in different countries using James Grunig's four models of public relations (Grunig, J., et al., 1995; Sriramesh, et al., 1999; Huang, 2001) or Dozier's and Broom's (1995) four hierarchical roles (Culbertson and Chen, 1996b; Wu and Taylor, 2003).

The present research focuses on two Middle Eastern Arab countries: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are two very different countries: a conservative kingdom and a federal and more liberal state.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a monarchy with a political system rooted in Islamic Sharia law. Saudi Arabia has no formal constitution and has no tradition of peaceful political protest or indeed political organisation beyond the tribal unit. There is no civil society; no professional unions or organisations exist. In contrast, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven emirates, previously known as the Trucial States. To ensure effective governance of the United Arab Emirates, the rulers of the seven emirates agreed to draw up a provisional constitution specifying the powers allocated to the new federal institutions. There are no political parties in the UAE. The constitution provides for civil freedoms but in practice the government limits freedom of association, and the establishment of NGOs is subject to governmental approval. However, numerous unregistered NGOs are left to operate

without government interference. Permits are required for organised public gatherings, which are invariably denied if the purpose is political.

Hence, the intention of the present study is to examine the socioeconomic and political challenges that are expected to influence the development of public relations in KSA and UAE. Sriramesh and White (1992) summed up their conceptualisation linking societal culture and public relations by asserting that societal cultures that display lower levels of power distance, non-authoritarianism, and individualism are most likely to develop excellent public relations practices. Sriramesh and Vercic (2009) asserted that:

*“The Western definition of public relations assumes a democratic political structure in which competing groups seek legitimacy and power through public opinion and elections.... With an increase in the level of democratisation of a society has come a concomitant increase in the level of sophistication of the public relations profession. There is little doubt however that strategic public relations flourish in pluralistic societies.” (p.7)*

Sriramesh claims that:

*“Only pluralistic societies offer an environment that is conducive to practicing strategic public relations... in societies where public opinion is not valued, the nature of public relations tends to be one-way and propagandistic in nature. Democracy then is the primary underpinning on which strategic public relations thrives.” (Sriramesh, 2004, p.5)*

Kim and Sriramesh (2009) also see that:

*“Societies that have pluralistic political systems, free or at least partly free media systems, and greater individualism among the populace, are more likely to foster higher levels of activism requiring more symmetrical or strategic approaches to public relations practice.” (cited in Sriramesh and Vercic, 2009, p.92)*

Certainly this is recognised by scholars of Asian public relations who clearly see links between increasing democratisation, deregulation, liberalisation and greater transparency and the development of public relations as a strategic management profession (Sriramesh, et al., 1999, Sriramesh, 2004; Singh, 2000; Wu, Taylor and Chen, 2001; Ekachai, 1995). The present research illustrates these links between increasing democratisation/liberalisation and the development of public relations in Figure 1. The graphic illustration shows clearly that democracy is considered to be the cornerstone of excellence in public relations. Hence, any increase in the level of democratisation of a society; should increase the level of sophistication of the public relations profession practiced in that society.

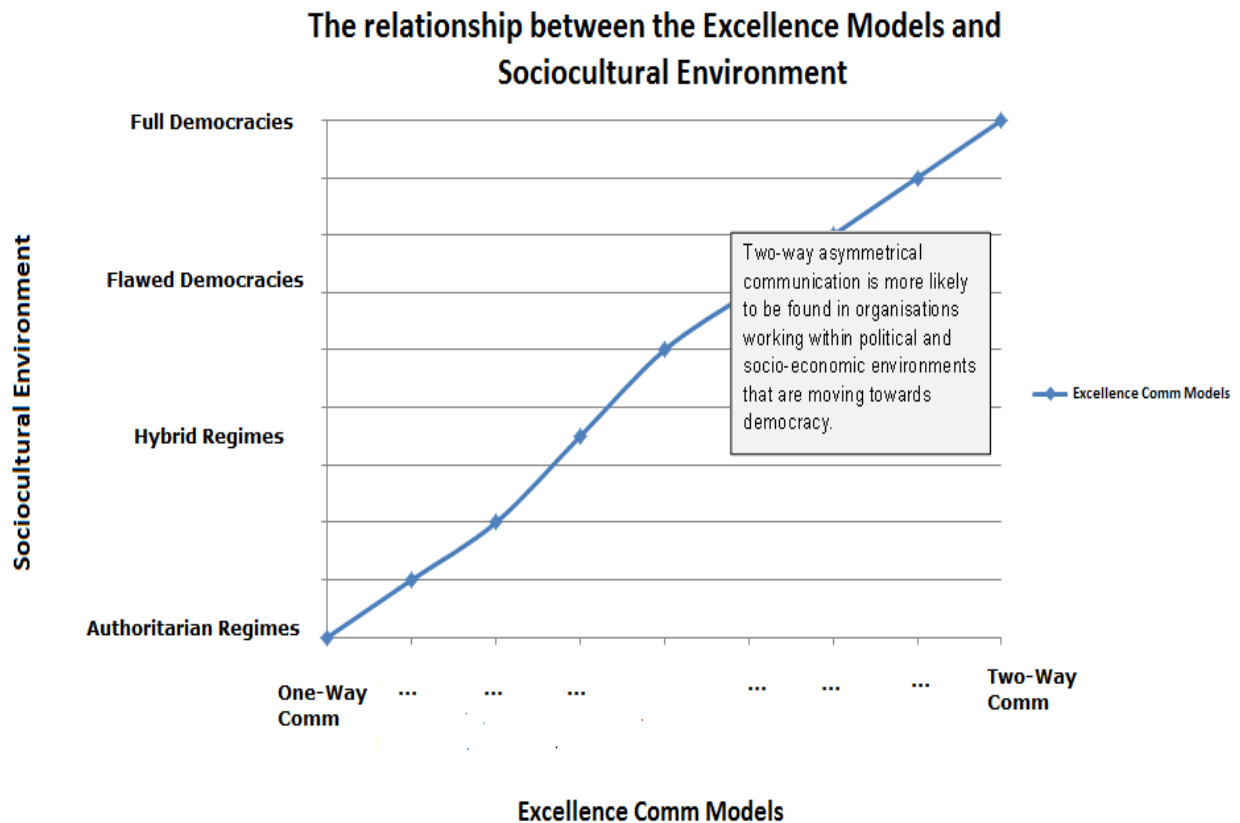


Figure (5) the relationship between the excellence models and socio-cultural environment<sup>39</sup>

### 6.3. Research questions

Public relations practitioners with a two-way asymmetrical communication and management perspective are more likely to be found in organisations working within political and socioeconomic environments that are moving towards democracy. Thus, to examine the

<sup>39</sup> - The Economist Intelligence Unit annual report 'democracy Index 2012' shows UAE ranks 149th and KSA 163th out of the 165 countries on the list. The Democracy Index is an index compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit, that measures the state of democracy in 167 countries, of which 166 are sovereign states and 165 are United Nations member states. The index is based on 60 indicators grouped in five different categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, functioning of government, political participation, and political culture. In addition to a numeric score and a ranking, the index categorizes countries as one of four regime types full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes. The index was first produced for 2006. Available from: [http://www.economist.com/media/pdf/DEMOCRACY\\_INDEX\\_2007\\_v3.pdf](http://www.economist.com/media/pdf/DEMOCRACY_INDEX_2007_v3.pdf). And from: [http://www.eiu.com/public/topical\\_report.aspx?campaignid=DemocracyIndex12](http://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=DemocracyIndex12). [Accessed 13 Feb 2014]

socioeconomic and political challenges that are expected to influence the practice of public relations in KSA and UAE, the present study addresses the following questions.

**RQ1:** Which models of public relations are practiced in KSA and UAE?

**RQ2:** Which roles are practiced by public relations practitioners in KSA and UAE?

**RQ3:** What are the socio-cultural, political, and economic factors that determine public relations models and roles practiced in KSA and UAE?

The purpose of the investigation here is to determine how public relations practitioners demonstrate public relations models and public relations practitioners' roles in these two Arab countries. Such investigations will reveal the influence of the societal-cultural values on the practice of public relations in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

#### **6.4. Methodology of data collection: quantitative and qualitative approach**

The aim here is to outline the methodological approach and the methods chosen to better serve the purposes of this research. According to Polit and Hungler (1995), methodology refers to ways of obtaining, organising and analysing data. Methodology decisions depend on the nature of the research question. Mouton (1996) describes methodology as the means or methods of doing something. According to Creswell (1994) methodology includes the design, setting, sample, methodological limitations, and the data collection and analysis techniques in a study. In deciding which methodology to use, the most important factor is the nature of the research questions to be explored. Quantitative and qualitative methodologies tackle different kinds of problems (Grunig, L., 1992).

Marshall and Rossman (1995) see quantitative methodology, the traditional schema of scientific inquiry, as appropriate when data can be obtained from experiments, the variables are known and unambiguous, and processes are relatively simple. On the other hand, qualitative research is a process-oriented method used to understand, interpret, describe and develop a theory of a phenomena or setting. It is a systematic, subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning (Creswell and Plano, 2007; Field and Morse, 1985).

Qualitative research is mostly associated with words, language and experiences rather than measurements, statistics or numerical figures. Researchers who use qualitative research adapt a person-centred and holistic perspective to understand the human experience, without focusing on specific concepts. The original context of the experience is unique, and rich knowledge and insight can be generated in depth to present a lively picture of the participants' reality and social context. These events and circumstances are important to the researcher (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996).

Gorard and Taylor (2004, p.1) state that “qualitative and quantitative approaches have strengths, and that even greater strength can come from their appropriate combination”. Furthermore, Gorard and Taylor (2004) point out that researchers should think of qualitative and quantitative approaches as being a continuum rather than a distinction; their methods are “merely tools” to use when appropriate and they are nearly always more powerful when used in combination rather than in isolation (Gorard and Taylor, 2004, p.47).

Moreover, it is believed that combining methods enhances the strength of the research to answer its questions and absorb all possible information in all stages. Consequently,



combining methods seems logically attractive to answer the present research questions. On the other hand, to explore some of the disadvantages of such an approach, it seems that combining methods in research might have some limitations basically because some researchers assume that “adopting a method automatically means adopting an entire paradigm” (Gorard and Taylor, 2004, p.9). Morgan (2007) argues that “the increasing interest in combining qualitative and quantitative methods... led to calls for greater clarity about the linkage between philosophical commitments at the so-called paradigm level and practical procedures at the level of data collection and analysis”. Another limitation is that some researchers find it convenient to work with methods they are used to; they think that using a quantitative method with their qualitative strategy or vice versa might weaken their research. It is strongly arguable here that such combining will enrich and enhance findings and interpretations of the research.

In addition some researchers argue that combining methods is not an easy task and the disadvantage of it is that such an approach is more time consuming than single approaches. Some argue that such an approach is more expensive and it is hard to secure enough funds. Others argue that the main disadvantage of this approach is that it is occasionally difficult to interpret conflicting results produced by different methods (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

In applying a combined approach to this study, two questionnaires were designed to produce quantitative data. Questionnaires are described by Gray (2004) as a “research tool through which people are asked to respond to the same set of questions” (p.186). In parallel, and to better evaluate the models and roles practiced by practitioners in both KSA and UAE, the present study has employed two types of qualitative methods. Firstly, employing

*examples/case studies* to describe the practice in real-life examples of public relations departments and public relations agencies based in the Middle Eastern Arab countries, specifically in KSA and UAE. Secondly, open statements were discussed in a form of semi-structured interviews with journalists based in KSA and UAE in order to understand their views on the profession of public relations in both countries. To obtain this type of quantitative data the research employed a free and open approach whereby the interviewee had sufficient space to air views and opinions without unnecessary interruption. As Deacon, et al. (1999, p.65) argue, semi-structured interviewing abandons concerns about standardisation and control, but seeks to promote “an active, open ended dialogue” to explore the participants’ perspectives. Moreover, in some parts of the questionnaires, empty boxes were added to further explore the views of the participants on key issues.

#### **6.4.1. Quantitative data**

In general terms a ‘questionnaire’ is a research instrument consisting of a list of questions that a number of people are asked so that information can be collected about something. It is a ‘tool’ for collecting and recording information about a particular issue of interest. (Brown, 2001) asserts that a questionnaire is any written instrument that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers. It is mainly made up of a list of questions, but should also include clear instructions and space for answers or administrative details.

Questionnaires can provide quantitative data using closed (or fixed-response) questions, where the respondent is presented with a number of alternative responses to a question and asked to mark the one that they feel is most appropriate (Oppenheim, 1992). The

questionnaire may be self-administered, posted or presented in an interview format. A questionnaire may include check lists, attitude scales, projective techniques, rating scales and a variety of other research methods. As an important research instrument and a tool for data collection, a questionnaire has its main function as a measurement and data collection method in surveys and to yield quantitative data (Oppenheim, 1992). Also, the instrument may be used to generate qualitative and exploratory data (Dornyei, 2007).

Qualitative data can be gathered using open (or free-response) questions to which respondents are asked to write their own answer (Oppenheim, 1992). Closed questions have been criticised for forcing people to choose their answer from the alternatives provided rather than answering in their own words (Converse and Presser, 1986). However, closed questions are more specific than open ones, communicate the same frame of reference to all respondents, and well-designed response categories can more accurately detect differences among respondents (Converse and Presser, 1986).

The main advantages of questionnaires are that they are relatively easy to analyse; they are simple to administer; the format is familiar to most respondents; they should be simple and quick for the respondent to complete; information is collected in a standardised way; and they are usually straightforward to analyse. Questionnaires also have disadvantages, such as it is sometimes difficult to obtain a sufficient number of responses, especially from postal questionnaires; respondents may ignore certain questions; and respondents may misunderstand questions because of poor design or ambiguous language.

### **a. The survey population and sample**

Shoemaker and McCombs (2003) defined population as “the aggregate of elements about which the researcher wants to make inferences” (p.158). Graziano and Raulin (1993) described a target population as “the larger population in which we are ultimately interested” (p.194). The present research is adopting the “convenience sampling” method (Stacks, 2002) to select PR professionals, who are available and accessible. The researcher used this type of non-probability sampling method (Stacks, 2002) because access to every unit in the population is not available.

Moreover, the research is following the method of “snowball” sampling as a non-probability sampling technique that is based on finding participants through referrals. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) defined *snowball sampling* as obtaining a sample through referrals among people who know other people with some characteristics that are of research interest.

The population for the surveys was a convenience sample selected from the professional public relations organisations and public relations e-networking groups across the KSA and UAE. Emails were sent to members of the International Public Relations Association - Gulf Chapter (IPRA-GCC), Middle East Internal Communications Network, Abu Dhabi Media and PR Networking Group, Abu Dhabi Public Relations and Communications Professionals, Dubai PR Professionals, GCC based PR and Communications Professionals, Gulf PR Professionals, and Middle East Public Relations Association (MEPRA) (Appendix 1).

The survey was also placed online in the hope of acquiring more responses. This decision was made after consulting with a number of individuals in the public relations field, who all

stated a strong preference for an online survey. The site was located at: <http://www.bridgetoarabia.com> (Appendix 5). Furthermore, the web site address was distributed on other social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn (Appendix 6). The response rate for this study was difficult to discern based on the inability to truly track email distribution through organisational solicitation and email list distribution.

## **b. Pilot questionnaires**

In order to avoid misunderstanding and ambiguous language, pilot questionnaires were delivered to the respondents to examine their validity in covering the research issues both in terms of content and detail, reliability in measuring consistency, objectivity through keeping the generated data clear from the influence of subjectivity and various interpretations of thoughts, and ethical considerations. Gray (2004) asserts that piloting a questionnaire helps to eliminate or reduce misleading questions.

Pilot questionnaires were undertaken by surveying 15 public relations practitioners based in KSA and UAE. Sets of items related to models and roles of public relations in the dominant coalition were used. The respondents for the study were selected from professional public relations departments in governmental and private organisations in KSA and UAE. After selecting a starting point by using the available contacts (convenience sampling) in each country, the respondents were emailed the questionnaires with a covering letter explaining the nature of the study. The pilot survey aimed to bring out a wide range of participants' positions and enhance access to different perspectives.

The pilot survey indicated that organisations committed to professionalism use two-way communication techniques while organisations which are more conservative adopt one-way communication techniques. The findings contribute to theories of public relations and support the position that public relations practitioners with two-way communication and management perspectives are more likely to be found in organisations working within political systems that are moving toward democratisation.

Despite the small size of the pilot survey, it produced practical lessons for the planning of the main questionnaire survey. Lessons learned include the need to: (1) identify and resolve obstacles; (2) find new and more effective channels of communication for survey dissemination; and (3) define additional approaches to avoid ambiguous terms and inappropriate wording. For example one respondent suggested adding a few sub-questions to differentiate between the public relations models as not all practitioners have a formal educational qualification in public relations. Another respondent suggested simplifying and adjusting the questions so that they were more related to practice, with less academic language.

Based on the pilot survey feedback and with the study objectives in mind, the survey instrument was evaluated, re-adapted and further developed. The result is two questionnaires designed and uploaded to the Internet using the online survey service provided by <http://www.zoomerang.com> to be available for the potential population (Appendix 2).

### **c. Questionnaire (1): public relations models**

To quantitatively investigate the public relations models that are most applicable in KSA and UAE, the questionnaire (Appendix 3a) drew on Grunig's four public relations models plus the personal influence model (Sriramesh, 1992) and the cultural interpreter model (Lyra, 1991). These instruments have been in use by public relations researchers for years. Grunig and Hunt (1984) proposed four models of public relations - press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical - to describe organisational communication activities. Grunig and Hunt characterised the four models as abstractions and simplifications that help to describe the reality.

Sixteen questions, four questions for each model, identify four models of public relations practice. An additional eight questions were formulated for the personal influence model Sriramesh (1991) discovered in India and the cultural interpreter models. Lyra (1991) used the cultural interpreter model in Greece to explain the local culture to the management of multinational organisations. These questions were reformulated to reflect organisational specific activities or practices. For example, the press agency question was worded, "the main purpose of my organisations' public relations is to gain publicity for my organisation/client". The goal of this reformulation was to examine the actual public relations assumptions of practitioners.

The present study is using the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) instrument to determine the models of public relations practice in KSA and UAE. The IABC study used a five-point Likert-type scale; the same questionnaire and scale were used in the study reported here to measure the level of agreement of each respondent with the statements

regarding role enactment. The instrument provided four statements for each model and asked the respondent to indicate on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) the extent to which he/she agreed with that specific statement.

Received surveys were screened for usability, which resulted in the elimination of several surveys. The reported data is based on  $n = 74$  for KSA and  $n = 124$  for UAE.

#### **d. Questionnaire (2): public relations practitioner's roles**

To quantitatively investigate the public relations practitioners' roles that are most applicable in KSA and UAE, a questionnaire (Appendix 3b) was designed based on Broom's (1982) practitioner role measure, which emerged as a key source of public relations roles because it combines a set of standardised core questions. Dozier and Broom (1995) developed 24-point surveys measuring different role activities of practitioners, which they distributed to PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) members. The survey results formed the bulwark of their studies into practitioner roles.

Broom's (1982) and Dozier and Broom's (1995) practitioner role measures have been used in many other studies such as McMillan (1984), Pollack (1984), Fabiszak (1985), Pollack (1986), Reagan, et al. (1990), and Wetherell (1989). The role measures have also been used by the American public relations community for more than a decade. Although four roles are posited in theory as expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem solving process facilitator and communication technician, research using the scale has shown consistently that only two roles emerge from the analysis, public relations technician and public relations manager, (Lauzen, 1992; Reagan, et al., 1990).



Moreover, the questionnaire also used a third role in public relations, namely the 'strategist', introduced by Moss (1999). A Likert-type scale was used to measure the level of agreement of each respondent with the statements regarding role enactment. The instrument provided the number of statements of function for each role and asked the respondent to indicate on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) the extent to which he/she agreed that the specific task was part of their duties as a public relations practitioner. A practitioner's role was computed by examining the mean scores for each set of role measures. If a practitioner's mean score was higher on the technician items, the practitioner was classified as a technician. If a practitioner's mean score was higher on the managerial scores, the practitioner was classified as a manager or strategist. The reported data is based on  $n = 65$  for KSA and  $n = 79$  for UAE.

#### e. The process of data collection – survey

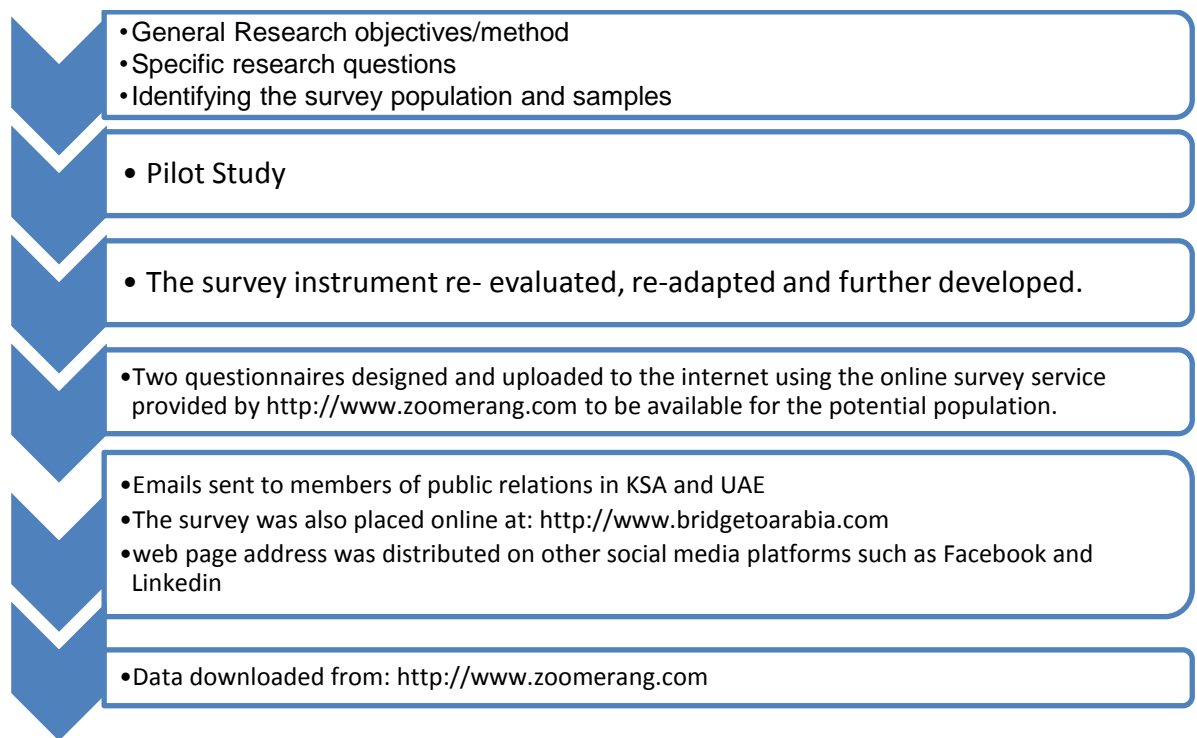


Figure (6) - The process of data collection – survey

#### 6.4.2. Qualitative data

To better evaluate the models and roles practiced by practitioners in both KSA and UAE, the present study has employed two types of qualitative methods. Firstly, employing ‘examples’ to describe the practice in real-life public relations departments and public relations agencies based in the Middle Eastern Arab countries, specifically, in KSA and UAE. Secondly, conducting semi-structured interviews with journalists based in KSA and UAE to discuss the issue of public relations practice in both countries. Having explored public relations practice from its practitioners' point of view, it is also vital to hear the voice of the other side of the communication process that has a direct relationship with public relations practitioners and

works sometimes as its link with the public. This, from the researcher's point of view, would provide a clearer and better view of public relations practice in KSA and UAE.

### **1- Examples of public relations department and firms in KSA and UAE**

To better serve the purpose of this section, a convenience sample was selected from professional public relations department and public relations firms based in KSA and UAE. The present study has selected four examples to introduce descriptive data on how in-house public relations and public relations agencies are operating in KSA and UAE. The Arab Radio and Television's (ART) public relations department, and the Trans-Arabian Creative Communications Services (TRACCS) are to represent respectively the in-house public relations departments and the public relations agencies operating in KSA. The Emirates Airline's corporate communications department and ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller (Public Relations Agency) are to represent respectively the in-house public relations departments and the public relations agencies operating in UAE. There is no specific criteria used in choosing these four examples except for their business size, activity, and location in the two countries.

A descriptive approach in data collection in qualitative research gives the ability to collect accurate data on and provide a clear picture of the phenomenon under study (Mouton and Marais, 1996). This approach is used to describe variables rather than to test a predicted relationship between variables. Qualitative research is often associated with case studies as research strategy (Yin, 1984). Merriam (1998) defines a case study as "an examination of a specific phenomenon, such as a programme, an event, a process, an institution, or a social group" (1988, p.9). Wilson (1979, p.448), for example, conceptualised the case study as a

process “which tries to describe and analyse some entity in qualitative, complex and comprehensive terms, not infrequently as it unfolds over a period of time”.

Yin (1984) offers a more technical definition by equating a case study with an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Yin (1984) places more emphasis on the method and the techniques that constitute a case study. In terms of the purposes of case study research, Yin (2003) categorises case studies as explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive. The explanatory type of case studies would be used to answer a question that sought to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies. The exploratory type of case study is used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes (Yin, 2003). The descriptive type of case study is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2003).

Merriam (1998) further explain the strengths case study as a method offers as a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. In contrast, Lincoln and Guba (1981) note the limitations of case study with regard to issues of reliability, validity, and generalisability. To overcome the limitations issues raised by Lincoln and Guba (1981), the present study considered the following aspects when selecting the samples: 1) the examples should represent organisations based in the Middle Eastern Arab countries, specifically organisations based in KSA and UAE;. 2) the examples should represent “in- house” public relations departments as well as public relations firms; 3) the examples should represent private, government, and semi-

government sectors. Other factors were also considered, such as the researcher's own experience and contacts and the accessibility and availability of information (not all organisations are willing to provide inside information).

In collecting the data for the this section of the study, the researcher has employed a combination of methods, tools, and sources, including, the researcher's personal experience and observation; personal and direct communication with members of public relations staff within the chosen organisations/firms; information/portfolios available on the organisations/firms' websites; and other published materials.

## **2- The semi-structured interview**

An interview is defined by Anderson (1998, p.190) as a “specialised form of communication between people for a specific purpose”. He adds (p.190) “thus, the interview is a highly purposeful task which goes beyond mere conversation”. The ‘interview’ tool is a flexible and adaptable way of finding things out and a fascinating tool to use human language as behaviour in its own right and to open a virtually unique window to explore what lies behind people's actions. Wallen and Fraenkel (2001) show that interviews are probably the most effective way to enlist the cooperation of the respondents as rapport can be established, questions can be clarified and incomplete answers can be followed to establish the respondent's precise answer. In addition, personal interviewing permits spending more time with respondents when necessary. Furthermore, Anderson (1998; 1990) offers an explanation of the advantages of conducting interviews as follows:

*“There are many advantages to the interview as a method of data collection. People are more easily engaged in an interview than in completing a questionnaire. Thus, there are fewer problems with people failing to respond. Second, the interviewer can clarify questions and probe the answers of the respondent, providing more complete information than would be available in written form. It is this opportunity for in-depth probing that makes the interview so attractive when dealing with informed respondents. Third, interviewing enables the interviewer to pick up non-verbal cues, including facial expressions, tones of voice and, in the case of interviews conducted on the respondent's turf, cues from the surroundings and context.”*

Based on the degree of structuring, interviews can be divided into three categories: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews (Fontana and Frey, 2005). At one extreme there is the fully structured interview; in this type predetermined questions are asked and the responses are recorded on a standardised schedule. The second type is the semi-structured interview; here the interviewer works out a set of questions in advance but is free to modify and adjust their order according to respondents' perspectives during discussions. The final type is the unstructured interview which is completely informal as the interviewer has a general area of interest and allows the conversation to develop within this area (Minichiello, et al., 1990).

#### **a. The interview population and sample**

The importance of the media to organisations, and to their public relations departments cannot be ignored. Argenti (2007) says that one of the most critical areas within any

corporate communication function is the media relations department. Grabowski (1992) went further when he considered media relations as the core of the public relations profession, adding that a successful public relations campaign cannot be waged without successful media relations, as media coverage can have significant positive or negative impact on every aspect of an organisation's operations. Other studies of the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners have shown that journalists relegate practitioners to a lower status not only because of perceived poorer job performance and lower ethical conduct, but also because they perceive practitioners to have less honourable intentions (Stegall and Sanders, 1986). Baskin and Aronoff (1998) say that journalists have mostly negative attitudes towards public relations professionals. In research they cite, a majority of journalists considered the status of journalism to be superior to the status of public relations.

Research studies suggest that the two most significant factors that journalists dislike about the practice of PR are the volume of information distributed to media outlets and the restrictions on access to people and information. Some researchers argue that the problems between journalists and public relations practitioners are technology-based and have more to do with writing than anything else. Marken (1994) explains this point by reporting that "nearly every editor and reporter complains that the writing quality of the PR materials has deteriorated to a dangerous level, with many releases lacking clarity, brevity and directness".

On the other hand, PR practitioners were found to be less negative about journalists. Kopenhaver, et al. (1984 cited in Furlan, 2011) and Stegall and Sanders (1986) found that public relations officials were quite capable of assessing the opinions of journalists and they had a positive view of journalists and were eager to work with them. Stegall and Sanders (1986) concluded that public relations practitioners were not happy with the tendency of the

press to seek negative and sensational information, and they felt the press did not pay sufficient attention to what they viewed as constructive information.

Nevertheless, both journalists and public relations officers find themselves mutually dependent on one another, a situation which demands cooperation, while their divergent control interests cause distrust and opposition. The research conducted by Shin and Cameron (2005) established that public relations professionals have a tendency towards cooperation, whereas journalists are more directed towards conflict. Therefore any framework used to understand the relationship between journalists and public relations officers must be able to integrate the dimensions of both cooperation and conflict.

The group of interviewees was composed of 26 journalists based in KSA (n=15) and UAE (n=11) who were capable of clarifying complex issues concerning the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners in each country. The sample size was based on the recommendations of McCracken (1988), who suggested that a relatively small sample size is sufficient for qualitative interviewing because it is essential to work in-depth with fewer participants than superficially with many.

The participants included both women and men, Arab and non-Arab, employed by local media outlets. The population for the interviews was a convenience sample selected randomly from available contacts for journalists working with leading national newspapers in KSA (Alsharq Al Awsat, Alhayat are the Saudi/Pan-Arab newspapers that cover both local and international politics and are well read by those in power. Alriyadh, Aljazeera, Okaz,



Al-madina, Alwatan, Arab News and Saudi Gazette are the main local newspapers)<sup>40</sup> and UAE (Al Khaleej, Al Ittihad, Al Emarat Al Youm, Al Bayan, Gulf News and Khaleej Times)<sup>41</sup> (Appendix 4).

## **b. The Interview guidelines and questions**

The interview approach (Appendix 4) used elements of semi-structured and unstructured interviewing techniques (Lindlof, 1995; Patton, 1990). Semi-structured interviewing calls for a specific list of questions, given in a specific order, whereas unstructured interviewing is completely open-ended, allowing the participants to lead the conversation where they will.

During the researcher's employment in KSA (between January 2009 and March 2010), and in UAE (between April and November 2010), he managed to meet a number of journalists based in both countries and discuss with them the public relations practice in these two countries. All interviews took place in offices (the researcher's or the participant's office) with no specific arrangements. The researcher used a notebook to write down (in Arabic or English) the participant's views. Some participants preferred to follow up by providing more information by email.

All interviews were conducted according to specific guidelines (Appendix, 4). The interview guide created a menu of questions to be covered and leaves the exact order and articulation to the interviewer's discretion. Of course, all questions were asked to all participants in roughly the same way. However, there was a flexibility for the interviewer to ask optional questions,

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<sup>40</sup> - Arab media outlook 2009 -2013. Page103. Available from: <https://www.fas.org/irp/eprint/arabmedia.pdf>. [Accessed 10 Feb 2014]

<sup>41</sup> - Arab media outlook 2009 -2013. Page112. Available from: <https://www.fas.org/irp/eprint/arabmedia.pdf>. [Accessed 10 Feb 2014]

pass on others, and depart briefly to follow unexpected conversational paths. Three categories of functions were included in the discussion: the public relations practitioners as the source of messages (messenger); the message (press materials sent out by the public relations practitioners); and the communication channels used by the public relations practitioners to communicate with journalists. The participants were asked to comment freely on the following statements:

- 1) Public relations practitioners are helpful to journalists for informative, complete, timely news.
- 2) Public relations practitioners are honest with journalists.
- 3) Public relations practitioners understand the problems journalists encounter such as meeting deadlines, space limitations.
- 4) Journalists can trust public relations practitioners.
- 5) Public relations departments supply media with newsworthy materials.
- 6) Media materials sent by PR departments are well written and edited.
- 7) Materials sent by PR departments are usually relevant to my media outlet.
- 8) Materials sent by PR departments are usually relevant to the beat I cover.
- 9) Person-to-person communication is still the best way to build a mutual relationship between journalists and PR practitioners.

### c. The process of data collection – interviews

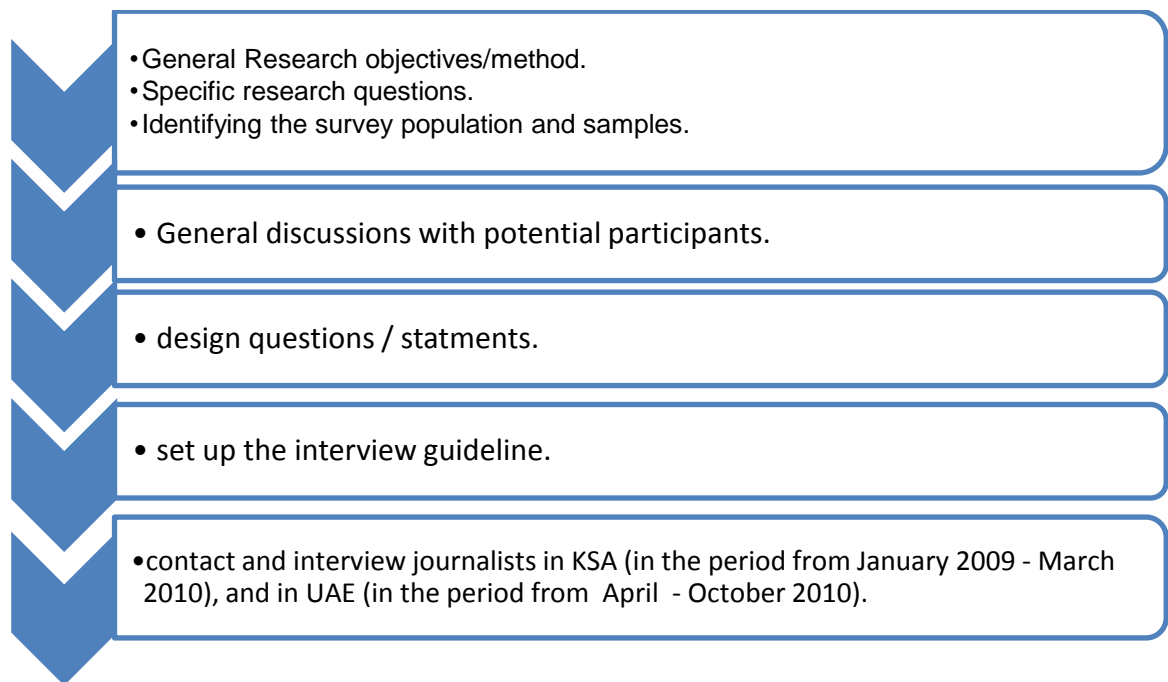


Figure (7) - The process of data collection – interviews

## 6.5. Conclusion

This chapter describes the research design, methodological issues, data collection and analysis. For the purposes of this research, a combined methods approach (qualitative and quantitative methodology) was employed at different stages of the research in order to answer the research questions and find out to what extent the country's socio-cultural and political environment influences the practice of public relations in the two Arab countries.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE IN KSA AND UAE**

### **7.1. Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to explore the current status of the public relations profession in KSA and UAE. Public relations professional practitioners usually work either as members of an in-house public relations/communications department, public relations agencies, or as independent consultants. In-house public relations departments are where the organisations have their own corporate communications or public relations departments and conduct their own public relations activities. A public relations agency is a professional services organisation, generally hired to conceive, produce and manage un-paid messages to the public through the media on behalf of a client, with the intention of changing the public's actions by influencing their opinions.

This section of the study introduces some examples of public relations departments and agencies of public relations in both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The aim of these examples is to have 'first-hand knowledge' of the nature of the public relations practiced in KSA and UAE. The data and information offered in this part are generated from three sources: 1) the researcher's previous work experience in KSA and UAE (the researcher was the head of public relations at Arab Radio and TV (ART) in KSA from January 2009 till March 2010 and public relations manager at Flydubai Airline in UAE between April and November 2010); 2) direct communication, exchanged emails, calls, and face to face conversations with top public relations employees working in both countries (these type of

communications occurred in the period between February 2014 and April 2014); and 3) published data.

## **7.2. Public relations practice in Saudi Arabia<sup>42</sup>**

Some studies (Al-Hazmi, 1990; Hussain, Noori and Radhi, 1992; Alanazi, 1996; Alharbi, 2001; Abdelhay, 2014) suggest that the ‘Western model’ of PR has a short history in the Middle East and was introduced in Saudi Arabia only in the late 1930s, when international oil companies started to explore the Saudi desert. During that period King Abdel-Aziz al-Saud also employed PR methods to expand his domain from the central Arab region of Najd, where he ruled from 1902 onwards, to encompass the entire Arabian Peninsula and establish the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Alanazi, 1996). The story of the nation's economic, social, and political development has been presented to the Saudi people and the outside world by the Saudi government through communications methods. In 1932 the Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco) established a PR department within its operational headquarters in the country's eastern province. The new department was assigned two tasks, to train Arab employees to work with Americans, and to teach American staff to understand, respect and adapt to Saudi culture (Freitag and Stokes, 2009).

Other researchers and scholars suggest that PR's beginning in Saudi Arabia was with the establishment of the first governmental cabinet of ministers in 1953. However, in those early stages, it was not practiced as nowadays and was called ‘information’ or ‘reception’ (Al-

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<sup>42</sup> - Materials in this part was published by the researcher: Abdelhay,A.Nawaf (2014) The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In Watson, Tom (Ed) Middle Eastern and African perspectives on the development of public relations - other voices. Palgrave Macmillan.

Badr, 1992; Alkadi, 2007). The PR departments in governmental institutions then practised three models.

1. The hail and farewell model: the functions and responsibilities of the PR department in this model were focused on hospitality and greeting. The efficiency of the department was determined by the level of satisfaction of management and the guest.
2. The government transactions model: PR staff were tasked to arrange completion of government transactions, such as the issue of licenses, visas, work permits and other paperwork.
3. The media relations model: employees focused on media relations activities (Algaleb, 2011).

Many top Saudi managers at that time did not understand the meaning and practices of PR (Al-Badr, 1992; Alkadi, 2007). Mohammed Alhizan, Dean of the Media College at Al-Imam Mohammed ibn Saud Islamic University, has commented that this confusion is caused by a number of reasons such as that there is no real PR education in Saudi universities as it is now not effective and does not cover different PR skills and issues. In addition, there is a lack of media awareness among decision makers. They hardly open PR departments and, when they do so, the role is usually restricted to issuing a newsletter on whose cover the chief executive shakes hands with the employees (cited in Alkadi, 2007).

The role of PR increased between 1977 and 1989 in Saudi organisations (Al-Hazmi, 1990). In a study of governmental communications, Sieny (1979 cited in Alanazi, 1996) reported that all 24 ministries analysed practiced some form of PR. In June 2012, the Council of Ministers in Saudi Arabia urged all government departments and service organisations to appoint spokesmen to provide the media with necessary information and clarifications. The Council

also urged public organisations to respond to media queries and open channels of communication and cooperation with the media. In terms of PR agencies, “Saudi Arabia has a very young public relations industry. The first public relations agency was only established in 1992”, commented Yahya Hamidaddin, Managing Director, partner and founder of Adalid Public Relations Agency’ (cited in Ghouth, 2014).

Nowadays, the Saudi market is witnessing an increase in the number of PR companies through the opening of new agencies which are launched for the first time or through established international agencies opening offices in Saudi Arabia. It is estimated that there are more than 210 local, regional, and international agencies providing PR services in Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia Business Guide, 2014). Major international agencies or their affiliates such as Asda'a Burson-Marsteller, Hill + Knowlton Strategies, Ketchum and MEMAC Ogilvy all have a presence, as do regional players, including TRACCS and DABO and Co, and local agencies such as Tihama Advertising and Public Relations Company, Landmark Events and PR, AFKAR PR and Adalid Public Relations (PR Week, 2014).

Hani Al-Okaily, Head of Communications for the Saudi Atomic Energy Authority, described the current status of the PR profession in KSA:

*“PR in Saudi Arabia is evolving at a rapid pace. Initially PR was seen as simply media coverage and protocol, but nowadays corporations and government entities are spending more time and money on the whole spectrum of communication aspects, from CSR to public affairs and crisis and issue management.” (PR Week, 2014)*

Alkadi (2007) summarised the findings of a number of studies (Alkhuraisi, 1986; Alenzy, 1988; Alhazmi, 1990; Hussain, et al., 1992 ; Alenzy, 1993; Marghalani, 1993; Tay'a, 1995; Alawfy, 1996; Assulaiman, 1999; Alfuhaid, 1999; Almutairi, 2000; Alharbi, 2001) related to the structure, organisation and practice of public relations departments in both public and private Saudi sectors, and he concluded that:

- The average age of public relations practitioners was between 24 and 40.
- The average number of years of experience was between 4 and 10.
- 54-72% of public relations practitioners held bachelor degrees.
- The most prominent tasks performed by public relations departments were: organising visits (79.1%), receiving delegates (76.1%), holding parties (62.7%) and participating in exhibitions (49.3%).
- Top management decided on the role played by public relations departments.
- Public relations practitioners confused public relations and advertising.
- There was an obvious weakness in dealing with crises.
- Public relations were not appreciated properly in both sectors.
- No research, planning or evaluations were conducted for programmes and activities of public relations departments.
- No independent budget was allocated for public relations.
- The public relations role was more important in the private sector.
- Public relations practitioners did not take part in the decision-making process.
- The concept and tasks of public relations were unclear in both sectors.

A recent survey among 50 PR experts to assess the current status and future direction of the PR industry in KSA (TRACCS, 2013) found that 92 percent of the participants had a PR



department within their organisation. To develop the PR industry, the survey indicated that the industry was already in a development phase but needed further improvements. Some 95 percent of respondents proposed making PR a pivotal industry that influenced companies' actions and policies. Responding to questions on implementation of the development process, 50 percent considered that the PR industry needed to develop a clear strategic direction in order to ensure effective progress, while 60 percent proposed developing a scientific methodology for PR.

**a. Public relations departments in KSA: ART- example<sup>43</sup>**



Arab Radio and Television Network (ART) was founded in 1993 as a part of the Dallah Barakah Group, comprising around 40 companies with diversified business from cinema and TV production to broadcasting and marketing. The Arab Radio and Television (ART) Network is the leading producer of premium Arabic and international sport, family programming and entertainment worldwide. ART has a key role to source, produce, and collate, complete sport and entertainment solutions for the Arab Media Corporation (AMC) which is perhaps the largest single Arab media holding company globally. The group has extensive access and rights to a premium selection of Arabic content, meaning pay television viewers in all of the ART territories get more value for their money than with any other cultural network.

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<sup>43</sup> - The researcher was the head of the PR department in ART in 2009/2010

The company was founded as a private network, with administrative headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, technical headquarters in Amman, Jordan, and production facilities spanning the entire Middle East. ART began broadcasting five channels to Europe and the Middle East via Arab-sat in 1993 from transmission facilities in Fucino, Italy. Since this time the growth of ART has been significant with the acquisition of world class transmission facilities in Avezzano, Italy, and the introduction of further successful commercial and niche television channels.

ART was the only Arabic-language television network characterised by its multitude of channels specialising in family entertainment, including family oriented dramas, series, plays, sports programmes, music video and documentaries. ART's ambition was not limited to the Arab world, but it expanded its coverage to Africa, North America, Europe and Australia to reinforce the relations between the Arab immigrants and their homeland and culture. ART produces over 6,000 live and recorded shows every year. The network has the largest Arabic movie library in the Middle East and (as part of the AMC conglomerate) has been associated with leading film production houses in the Arab world for over 30 years.

ART's CEO's strategy pinpointed the importance of marketing and careful attention has been paid to the management of marketing and public relations as a gateway of communications with the various sectors concerned with the work and activities of the company and its management, as well as dealing with the development and improvement of the company's brand and image through the media, and programmes designed for public relations with other businesses and society. Thus, the company reformed its public relations department in 2009. The public relations department structure and functions were designed to benefit ART by building trust and credibility with its stakeholders. In addition, the function of public relations

aim was to raise awareness about ART as well by distributing its messages to internal and external audiences. Moreover, public relations functions also aimed to promote ART values, reputation, and contribute to the corporate vision, mission and objectives. The work of the department involved staff dealing with the media as well as other key interest groups - opinion leaders, customers, pressure groups, suppliers and the like. The main tasks for the department of 16 public relations practitioners (14 male and 2 female - all Arabs) were:

- Manage and maximise media outreach through identifying media relations opportunities.
- Proactively promote ART, its programming and online content to wider audiences and provide general support on other MARCOMM products and services as required.
- Maintain close links with ART internal communications, to ensure that internal messages are consistent with external messages and that key communication campaigns are coordinated effectively.
- Help in news gathering for the internal newsletter.
- Develop excellent contacts with journalists in all target media. To react quickly and appropriately to regional and international events to ensure that opportunities to promote ART are maximised. Moreover; to keep an experienced journalist's eye open for appropriate news stories, and generally to make creative and innovative use of journalistic skills to produce ideas for winning space in local media increasing (favourable) press coverage and raising ART's profile.
- Coordinate as required media events to promote ART and to produce crisp, accurate, timely and relevant press releases, features, and other VNRs (video news

releases). Make sure that other hospitality elements are in place (give-aways, VIP gifts etc.)

- Coordinate press conferences and speaking engagements.
- Keep the head of PR fully informed of current press and other media coverage and of potential opportunities and problem areas.
- Provide fully professional media advice and support to the PR management.
- Develop and maintain a proactive and business oriented CSR strategy for ART.
- Organise social and networking opportunities.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> - Internal document obtained by the researcher, who was the head of the PR department within ART.

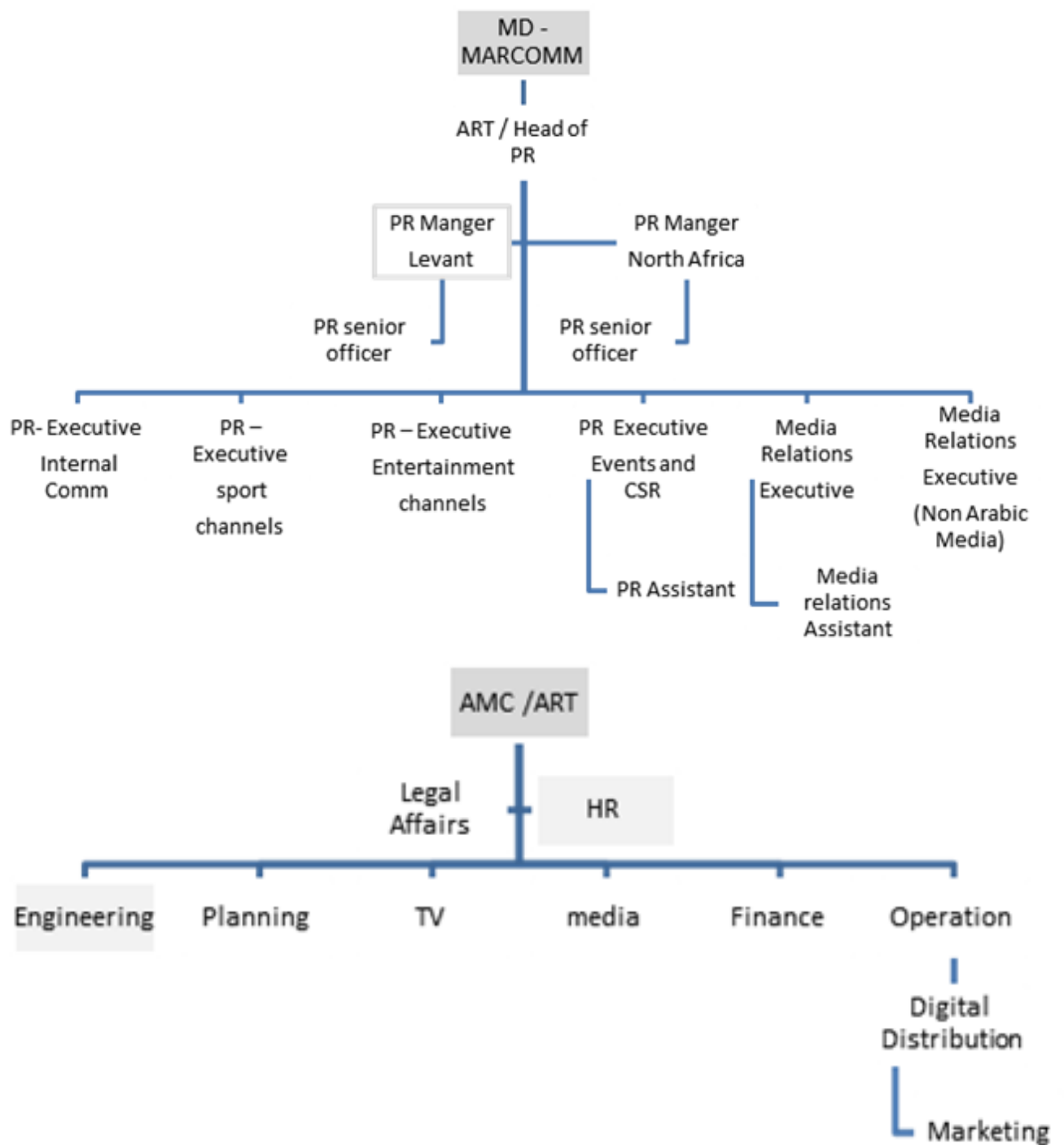


Figure (8): ART public relations department organisational position and structure

**b. Public relations agencies: (TRACCS) communications services – example**



Trans-Arabian Creative Communications (TRACCS) was founded in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1998 to provide public relations services for the Kingdom's business community and to multinational enterprises operating in the country. Within one year TRACCS became one of the leading public relations practices in Saudi Arabia.

*“When we launched TRACCS 15 years ago the public relations profession in the region was in its infancy. PR was seen as a promotional tool and an adjunct to advertising. As a result, we found it necessary to educate our clients on what PR is and what it can do for a business or government agency”.*<sup>45</sup>

Over the years TRACCS have built an organisation composed primarily of experienced local practitioners who understand their markets and speak the languages and dialects of the countries they serve.

*“Our knowledge of local markets and industries allows us to create communications strategies and campaigns with a deep understanding of the cultural, religious, bureaucratic and mercantile sensibilities of the markets we*

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<sup>45</sup> - In exchanged communication with Mohamed Al Ayed, Founder, President and CEO, TRACCS. [ 14/ 02/ 2014]

*serve. We know the region, we know the people, we know what works, and we have the skills to make it work.”*<sup>46</sup>

Today TRACCS has grown into one of the largest public relations networks in the Middle East and North Africa with 240+ professionals (over 60% male staff and over 90% Arab) working from 15 offices in 14 countries serving a diversified portfolio of 160+ international clients, leading local companies, government agencies and NGOs across the region, including PepsiCo, Four Seasons, Toyota Motor Corporation, MSD, Bristol Meyers Squibb, Samsung, Visa International, HSBC, Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, Western Union, DHL, Euromoney Conferences, Emerson, Dow Jones Indexes, Dubai Cares, Dubai Shopping Festival, Beiersdorf, USAID and many others.

The agency is offering its clients a wide range of services including corporate social responsibility, crisis management, digital communications, internal communication, media engagement, and strategic advisory services.

*“To establish the TRACCS network across widely divergent countries, we have re-engineered our regional offering into 6 service clusters: Strategic Advisory, Media Engagement, Internal Communications, Crisis Management, CSR and Training – providing our offices with both the clarification of fundamental public relations services and the tools they need to meet their clients’ needs in their individual markets. We have built and continue to build proprietary tools that directly relate to indigenous requirements.”*<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> - In exchanged communication with Mohamed Al Ayed, Founder, President and CEO, TRACCS.[14/02/ 2014]

<sup>47</sup> - In exchanged communications with Majdi Al-Ayed, TRACCS Deputy Managing Director, [ 14/02/ 2014]

The team responsible for delivering this spectrum of services includes writers, translators, filmmakers, presentation-makers, government relations, CSR, event management and training specialists, communications strategists and consultants who have handled a multiplicity of communications for a diverse range of businesses and industries including aviation, consumer, financial, health care, travel and tourism, public affairs, telecommunication, technology, and real estate.

In 2013, TRACCS diversified its services through two fully-fledged, semi-independent divisions “Powered by TRACCS”, which are Enrich, that offers training in multiple communications disciplines, and Digital, that offers a full suite of digital services. With trainers accredited by the authoritative UK-based Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA), Enrich provides a wide range of interactive training intensives in Arabic, English and French conducted by seasoned, accredited training specialists, all of whom are professional public relations practitioners. The new division was set up in response to a rise in client demand for training across the region.

*“With the launch of ENRICH we are taking the training services we have developed over a decade to another level.... Over the years we have evolved a wide range of training courses that have become increasingly sophisticated and effective. Today, our markets have matured to the point where public and private sector organisations are demanding extensive training for their people on a wide range of disciplines. We have trained hundreds of CEOs, company directors and spokespeople from across the region in Arabic, English and French. ENRICH is an expansion of our training capacities.”<sup>48</sup>*

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<sup>48</sup> - In exchanged communication with Mohamed Al Ayed, Founder, President and CEO, TRACCS.[14/02/ 2014]



In 2011 TRACCS was recognised by the Holmes Report as the Middle East Public Relations Consultancy of 2011 and ranked among the top 100 independent PR companies in the world. In 2011 TRACCS KSA improved its rank from 44 to 19 in the list of Saudi Arabia's 100 fastest growing companies, representing a 41% growth from 2010. The network was also ranked among the top 500 fastest growing companies in the Arab world according to the AllWorld Network's Arabia Fast Growth 500.

In 2012, TRACCS received the prestigious Gold 'Stevie' International Business Award as MENA Public Relations Agency of the year along with the Gold 'Sabre' Award and 'IPRA' Golden World Award. TRACCS was ranked number 122 (up from 126 in 2011) in the influential Holmes Report's Global Rankings, being the only Middle Eastern agency to be included among the top 250 public relations companies worldwide. TRACCS is also a member of the Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA).

### **7.3. Public relations practice in UAE**

The United Arab Emirates has been an outstanding example of the accelerated diffusion of information technologies in government and business sectors. This transition into a knowledge-based economy has embraced significant aspects of professional practices in the UAE, including the practice of public relations (Ayish, 2004). Public relations experienced its beginning and started to grow and develop alongside what was happening in the fields of education, media, industry, trade, services, agriculture, tourism and so on. International public relations firms started in this period to discover the huge business opportunities available in the United Arab Emirates (Ayish, 2005). Public relations in the United Arab

Emirates has emerged as an important profession to meet the challenges of the rapid development that the country has witnessed since the declaration of the union 1971 (Kirat, 2006).

Nevertheless, the term 'public relations' is often misappropriated in the United Arab Emirates, it is sometimes used to describe those individuals and departments whose duties may be restricted to procuring visas, arranging transportation and performing hospitality functions rather than practicing 'professional' public relations responsibilities. Nevertheless, it would be a grave error to underestimate professional public relations practice in the United Arab Emirates (Ayish, 2004).

According to another study (Badran, 1994) there is clear evidence that confusion exists about the definition, as well as the value, of communication and public relations, at least when viewed from a Western perspective. Private organisations, which are likely to be foreign-owned, were the most likely to have practitioners or top managers who understood modern public relations. Although government agencies and co-operative organisations exposed the Western concept of modern public relations, they did not put it into practice.

UAE public relations agencies are virtually identical to their counterpart firms in the United States in their organisational structure as well as in their technological resources. UAE public relations agencies are primarily focused on product publicity and marketing public relations, while offering a full-range of other public relations services, including receptions, protocol and social activities, special events, advertising, promotion and public service campaigns (Kirat, 2006).

In 1985, Al- Khaja surveyed 65 private, cooperative and governmental organisations in UAE concerning their public relations perceptions and practices. Al-Khaja concluded that confusion exists about the definition, as well as the value, of communication and public relations, at least when viewed from a Western perspective. Overall, the study found that in the UAE, public relations is vague, superficial and widely misunderstood.

In 1993, Al-Khaja's survey of 44 public and private organisations in four cities confirmed the 1985 findings, particularly in terms of the widespread misunderstanding of the concept of modern public relations, its functions and responsibilities. As the earlier study revealed, the majority of respondents perceived the primary function of public relations to be visitor reception, hospitality, and protocol. Planning, counselling and research were not found to be perceived as part of the public relations department in either study. Years after, Rizk (2005) performed a survey study that targeted a group of influential private and government organisations in the UAE. Rizk (2005) concluded that public relations in the UAE are still performing conventional roles, namely acting as a communication mediator between the organisation and its internal and external public, receiving and seeing off guests, improving the image of the organisation, in addition to holding expos, parties, and conferences.

Currently there is a huge demand in UAE for highly qualified PR professionals with global experience in all aspects of PR, from media relations to public affairs. From the smallest local corporate entity to the largest cross-regional conglomerate, the Middle East has a soaring new demand for public relations with more than 230 PR firms now operating in the region (Woodcraft, 2006). The industry is growing at between 15% and 25% year-on-year across the Middle East according to most estimates. The in-house sector is growing and "no blue chip

business in the region, domestic or international, would these days be likely to communicate without considering PR as an element of the communications mix” (Robinson, n.d.).

#### **a. Public relations departments in UAE: Emirates Airline – example**



Emirates Airline was established in 1985 by the government of Dubai (Emirates website). It is a state enterprise and serves as the national carrier of Dubai. The airline has Dubai International Airport as its hub. Emirates Airline has achieved consistent success since its establishment to become one of the leading airlines globally as evidenced by the many accolades and awards it has won. With a fleet of more than 215 aircraft, Emirates Airline currently flies to over 140 destinations in more than 80 countries around the world.<sup>49</sup> The airline's general environment is managed by the government, though indirectly, as there is a group commissioned by the government to run the airline on its behalf.

Emirates Airline has a very tall and rather hierarchical structure. The structure starts with the CEO and the chairman, vice chairman, executive secretaries, divisional VP, senior VPs, regional managers, area managers, department heads and supervisors, below that the staff reporting upwards.<sup>50</sup> In other words, it is a centralised organisation structure with top management holding a lion's share in decision making. It is divided into various departments, which are further divided into subgroups. The CEO and the chairman are the highest position

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<sup>49</sup> - Available from: [http://www.emirates.com/uk/english/destinations\\_offers/route\\_maps/route\\_map.aspx](http://www.emirates.com/uk/english/destinations_offers/route_maps/route_map.aspx). [Accessed 14 April 2014]

<sup>50</sup> - In exchanged conversation with a media relations manager at Emirates Airline. [ 26/02/ 2014]

in the company with one person (Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum) occupying both posts. The vice chairman follows in rank.

The airline is divided into three departments namely, engineering and operations, sales, cargo and facilities purchase and logistics (Emirates website). All marketing communication activities across the Emirates Group are the responsibility of the Corporate Communications division. Skilled, professional teams handle brand management, advertising, public relations, sponsorship and events, promotions, media relations, in-flight communications, audio-visual, in-flight magazines and an Internet unit running all of the Emirates Group websites. They cover the head office and the outstations.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> - In exchanged conversation with the media relations staff at Emirates Airline. [ 26/02/ 2014]

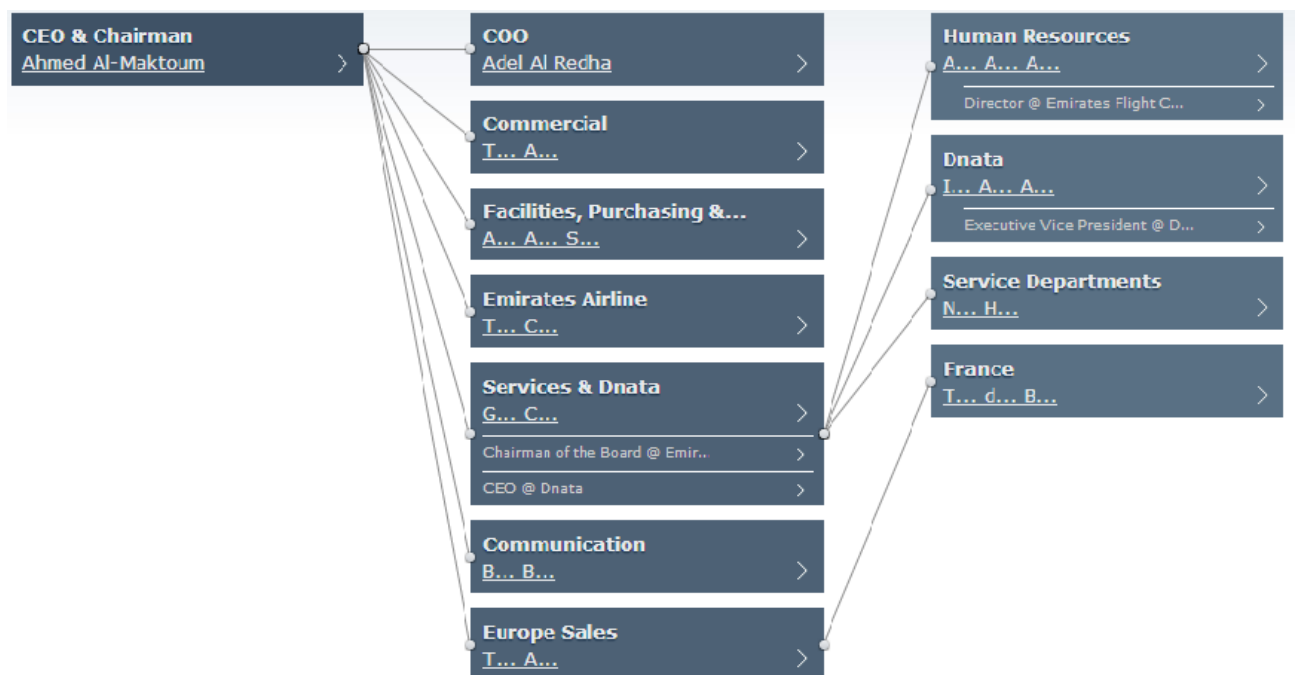


Figure (9): Emirates Airline corporate communications department organisational position and structure.<sup>52</sup>

Boutros Boutros, Divisional Senior Vice President of Corporate Communications for Emirates Group, told Gulf News that Emirates Airline spends about \$270m annually on corporate communications. He added:

*“the in-house public relations and communications team consists of 150 employees working within a number of departments including advertising, public relations, sponsorships, events, digital communications and visual services. Each one of these divisions works in tandem with both the business unit and the other communications disciplines. In addition to this we have over 125 agencies globally that are an extension of our already strong team.”*<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> - In exchanged conversation with the media relations staff at Emirates Airline. [26/02/ 2014]

<sup>53</sup> - Available from <http://gulfnews.com/emirates-to-enhance-brand-image-1.667051>. [ Accessed 12 March 2014]

Maurice Flanagan, Executive Vice-Chairman of Emirates Airline and Group, told Gulf News that:

*“Emirates spend around three percent of its annual revenue on advertisements, sponsorships, events, media relations and digital online and social media. In the financial year (2012/2013) the Emirates Group reported revenues of US\$ 21.1 billion, and would have spent around 3% of that annual revenue on these activities. The group spends 30 percent of its communications budget on sponsorships, 30 percent on advertisements, 20 percent on events and exhibitions, 10 percent on public relations and 10 percent digital. The airline is famous for using sports sponsorships to its maximum benefit. Over the last decade it has sponsored a number of popular European football clubs including Arsenal football club and its stadium. It is also partnered with Fifa to sponsor World Club Football.”<sup>54</sup>*

The former head of Emirates Airline's marketing department, for the past two decades, Mike Simon said: "this is an airline that believes in marketing. Marketing, which once made up 2.3 percent of Emirates' budget, today takes up about 2.7 percent.... an enormous amount to be spending on marketing and communications".<sup>55</sup>

The company places absolute value on social responsibility and corporate citizenship and believes that business ethics is integral to its success. Moreover, the firm's commitment to the environment extends to its interest on the ground. It has invested a colossal amount of money

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<sup>54</sup> - Available from <http://gulfnews.com/emirates-begins-brand-overhaul-1.1001096>. [Accessed 12 March 2014]

<sup>55</sup> - Available from: <http://www.thenational.ae/business/travel-tourism/the-man-who-built-emirates-into-a-global-brand-signs-off>. [Accessed 16 Feb 2014]

towards environmental conservation in various areas around the globe including the conservation reserve at the Dubai desert, which aims at preserving the cultural and natural heritage of the place. Other social responsibility areas include funding of education and health programmes for the needy in parts of Africa and India.

Moreover, Emirates has been committed to sponsorship in both UAE and around the world for over twenty years, beginning with the first powerboat race held in Dubai, in 1987. Emirates have an association with all major ICC tournaments, including the 2011 and 2015 ICC Cricket World Cups, ICC Champions Trophy and ICC World Twenty20. Emirates airlines are also major sponsors of English Premier League club Arsenal. In August 2009 the Scottish Junior Football Association announced that Emirates would sponsor their Scottish Cup competition. Emirates aircraft also have the FIFA World Cup logo on them, as Emirates is the official airline sponsor. Emirates Airline is the sponsor of AFC travel and play in AFC Champions League, AFF Suzuki Cup, as well as the primary shirt sponsor of the football clubs AC Milan, Arsenal, Hamburger SV, New York Cosmos, Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid. Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman and Chief Executive, Emirates Airline and Group, sees sponsorship as vital in the airline's marketing strategy. "We believe sponsorships are one of the best ways to connect with our passengers. They allow us to share and support their interests and to build a closer relationship with them".<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> - Available from: <http://www.emirates.com/uk/english/about/emirates-sponsorships/sponsorships.aspx>. [Accessed 18 March 2014]



## **b. Public relations agencies in UAE: ASDA'A - example**



Since its founding in 1999, Asda'a Burson-Marsteller has played a pivotal role in the development of the Middle East public relations industry. Asda'a Burson-Marsteller is part of the MENACOM Group, the region's leading communications network, which manages a diversified range of communications firms. The MENACOM Group employs nearly 1,200 professionals working across 57 offices in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. MENACOM is majority owned by WPP, one of the world's leading communications services networks, employing 135,000 people working in over 2,000 offices in 107 countries. Burson-Marsteller, was established in 1953, and the firm was named 'Consultancy of the Year' in the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) region by The Holmes Report in 2008; the International PR Consultancy of the Year by PR Week in 2008; and won the European Excellence Award for Agency of the Year in 2007.

Sunil John is the founder shareholder and Chief Executive Officer of Asda'a Burson-Marsteller. He set up the agency, with Joseph Ghossoub, President of MENACOM Group. The company which means 'echoes' in Arabic, operates its regional network through its head office in Dubai which manages 11 fully-owned offices in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia (Jeddah and Riyadh) and UAE (Dubai and Abu Dhabi). The agency employs more than 130 communications professionals region-wide (over 70% female and over 65% Arab). This extensive network is further complemented by 8 affiliate offices covering 17 countries in the wider MENA region.

ASDA'A B-M has earned its status as the Middle East's largest independent public relations consultancy, with an ever-growing portfolio of blue-chip government and corporate clients including Emaar, Emirates NBD, Ford Middle East, McDonalds Arabia, Etisalat ,Damas, Microsoft Middle East, and Nestlé Middle East.

Sunil John says:

*“Our job is to set the agenda, supporting government and business as they take on major issues and prove performance through transparency. We do this by building mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics – opening new lines of communication and facilitating dialogue.”<sup>57</sup>*

The central support divisions includes media relations, media monitoring and analysis, knowledge and insights, translation and event management. ASDA'A B-M provides counsel on a comprehensive range of strategic communications issues, offering services that include strategic planning, media relations and training, internal communications, crisis management, knowledge and insights, event management, digital communications, content development and media monitoring and analysis.<sup>58</sup>

#### **7.4. Discussion**

The findings of the present research show that organisations in the both KSA and UAE usually choose between three options: creating an in-house department of public relations,

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<sup>57</sup> - In exchanged communication with Sunil John, the Founder shareholder and Chief Executive Officer of the public relations agency ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller. [ 14/03/ 2014]

<sup>58</sup> - In exchanged communication with Sunil John, the founder shareholder and Chief Executive Officer of the public relations agency ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller. [ 14/03/ 2014]

engaging an external consultant represented by a public relations agency, or using both in-house public relations and an outside agency. For example Emirates Airline is employing this strategy. These types of organisations use a combination of their in-house public relations department and other specialist public relations companies contracted to provide more specific services. Nevertheless, it is noted that a lot of organisations in the Middle Eastern Arab countries like Saudi Arabia still outsource their public relations needs to different agencies, without having a public relations department.

#### **7.4.1. Public relations departments in KSA and UAE**

It is clear that not all companies or government departments have the same degree of understanding of how to optimise the use of public relations departments, as not all decision-makers have the same awareness of the public relations function. Some competent bodies of government institutions hardly create any departments of public relations, and when they do, they are either misused or abused. For instance, in the case of ART, the head of the public relations department was reporting to the managing director of marketing and communications department and not to the CEO of the company, while in the case of Emirates Airline, the divisional senior vice president of corporate communications is reporting directly to the chairman and CEO of the company. In the case of ART, the department was engaged mainly in media relations and events organising activities. In contrast, Emirates Airline's corporate communications department is involved in a wider spectrum of strategic communications activities.

In most cases, KSA and UAE organisations adopt one of two solutions for their public relations needs, either they have a public relations department or outsource their public

relations needs to a public relations agency or agencies. There are also companies that use both in-house public relations and outside help. This does not mean that all companies or government departments have the same degree of understanding of how to optimise the use of public relations. For instance, it is noted that still a lot of organisations in the Middle Eastern Arab countries like KSA and UAE outsource their public relations needs to different agencies, without having a public relations department. They usually give the job to the marketing executive, who might even request his advertising agency to do public relations work (this was the case in ART before January 2009). It is noted also that the lack of awareness among decision-makers towards the public relations function leads some organisation not to have an in-house public relations department. Nevertheless, it is clear that more government institutions and private organisations based in the region slowly understand the important need to have a dedicated person or team to handle their public relations needs.

#### **7.4.2. Public relations agencies in KSA and UAE**

After examining selected public relations agencies that are reputed to be high-quality and professional in KSA and UAE, the research found that public relations agencies operating in KSA and UAE have many similarities and differences compared to the public relations agencies operating in other parts of the world. In terms of similarities, public relations consultancies based in the region offer services comparable to those services provided by smaller agencies operating anywhere else in the world. In terms of differences, public relations consultancies based in the region still suffer many weaknesses. Generally speaking, all public relations agencies (local and international) that operate in the region are staffed with Arab (mainly from Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and locals) and non-Arab (mainly from UK, USA, Australia, South Africa, India, and Singapore) practitioners. Tristan

Peniston-Bird, Managing Director, Middle East, at Bell Pottinger public relations consultancy says that:

*“PR practice in the Middle East is different to the one in the Western or Asian countries, it is less mature and less sophisticated. It has taken the West around one hundred years for the profession of PR to mature. The ability for the Middle East to do so sooner requires greater transfer of skills and experience from Western practitioners.”*<sup>59</sup>

Phillip Vosloo, Associate Director, Impact Porter Novelli, public relations agency, based in KSA agrees with this view and adds:

*“The overall image and practice of PR is somewhat different in this region, in particular in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia where it is very different to customs in the Western world. It’s certainly more challenging as many local clients still perceive public relations to imply ‘press releases’. Local and regional PR consultancies in the Middle East should increasingly move beyond traditional-only editorial media tactics, and continue to seek out broader PR opportunities for clients. Much of the wider range of services that compose PR is still being ignored when clients consider their company’s reputation management needs. This expansion of parameters will also entail educating clients about the true value and potential of a strategic partnership with their agency, as opposed to viewing the agency only as a press release factory.”*<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> - In exchanged communication with Tristan Peniston-Bird, Managing Director, Middle East, at Bell Pottinger public relations consultant. (02/02/2014)

<sup>60</sup> - In exchanged communication with Phillip Vosloo, Associate Director, Impact Porter Novelli, public relations agency. (03/02/2014)

The present study found that, local public relations agencies are still facing many difficulties, such as the strong competition from international PR agencies operating in both countries. A journalistic feature published by the Saudi English daily newspaper Arab News pointed out that:

*“Local agencies face strong competition from international PR agencies. International agencies are preferred by clients because of their strong PR culture and ability to offer professional strategic advice... In contrast, local agencies focus only on media services including covering a client's commercial activities, media relations, and drafting and translating of press releases.”<sup>61</sup>*

Salem Hafez, a PR consultant based in KSA, told the Arab News:

*“More than 50 local PR agencies had to shut down because clients no longer wanted to use them. With local PR agencies only offering media services, clients often hire their own employees to do this work.”<sup>62</sup>*

Farooq Al-Khateeb, economics professor at King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, said to the Arab News that:

*“Local PR agencies do not have enough experience, do not have enough money to hire professional experts and provide training for their employees.*

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<sup>61</sup>- Poor services lead to closure of 50 local PR agencies. Arab News daily 3 May 2013. Available from: <http://www.arabnews.com/news/450261>. [Accessed 22 Nov 2013]

<sup>62</sup>- Poor services lead to closure of 50 local PR agencies. Arab News daily 3 May 2013. Available from: <http://www.arabnews.com/news/450261>. [Accessed 22 Nov 2013]

*They have to offer simple services to clients such as drafting clients' news or translations depending on employees who worked previously as journalists.”*<sup>63</sup>

Phillip Vosloo, Associate Director, Impact Porter Novelli, public relations agency, based in KSA is aware of what local public relations agencies are facing and asserts that:

*“It is increasingly becoming vital to offer clients the best global PR practices in the Middle East. This is firstly not only because local businesses have to attract, and compete with, a rapidly growing number of multinationals doing business in and with the Middle East, but also because these multinationals are also increasingly turning to local PR agencies to service them – but to service them on par with international best practice... With continued and growing exposure to global best business practices, PR practitioners in the Middle East will also increasingly have to match international communications best practices while balancing the needs of local markets.”*<sup>64</sup>

In contrast, Sunil John, Chief Executive Officer of ASDA'A Burson- Marsteller sees that international agencies that operate in the region also suffer many weaknesses:

*“Some international firms arrived in the region with little understanding of its unique dynamics, limited appreciation of its historical context and no regard for its cultural sensitivities. Armed with fancy global credentials, such firms*

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<sup>63</sup> - Poor services lead to closure of 50 local PR agencies. Arab News daily 3 May 2013. Available from: <http://www.arabnews.com/news/450261>. [Accessed 22 Nov 2013]

<sup>64</sup> - In exchanged communication with Phillip Vosloo, Associate Director, Impact Porter Novelli, public relations agency. (03/02/2014)

*have done the industry a disservice by making very large promises but delivering very little of significance.” Sunil (2011)*

Sunil (2011) asserted that:

*“Familiarity with global best practices is a prerequisite for PR firms operating in this region, especially now. That’s a fact. But it is no substitute for real knowledge of the Middle East – including an understanding of the complex web of the sometimes very personal relationships that informs all communications here.”*

Tristan Peniston-Bird, Managing Director, Middle East, at Bell Pottinger public relations consultant sees the relationship between international practitioners and their local counterparts or colleagues as an “experience exchange” rather than a competition or a conflict relationship. He adds:

*“This relationship, I see it as symbiotic, as I bring an international perspective including experience and knowledge, whereas they bring a regional/local perspective. Whereas I bring best practice in technical aspects of our job, my Arab counterparts bring cultural knowledge and experience of what practices will work in the region.”*<sup>65</sup>

Phillip Vosloo, Associate Director, Impact Porter Novelli, public relations agency, based in KSA believes it is a fairly balanced relationship and adds:

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<sup>65</sup> - In exchanged communication with Tristan Peniston-Bird, Managing Director, Middle East, at Bell Pottinger public relations consultant. (02/02/2014)



*“I believe it is a fairly balanced relationship. From personal experience I have often gained much needed consumer and media relations insight from Arab colleagues. When ‘new arrivals’ Western expats relocate to the Middle East to practice PR, they soon learn that one cannot simply copy and paste Western PR approaches and practices in our region. They require insights of Arab colleagues who are well versed in how PR is conducted locally. At the same time I daily endeavour - through conscious efforts - to empower Arabic-speaking colleagues by sharing knowledge of PR approaches and methodologies as adopted in countries such as the United States of America, United Kingdom and even my home country, South Africa (where the PR communications industry had rapidly adopted other Western world PR practices over the last 20 years).”<sup>66</sup>*

Elizabeth Sen, Deputy Managing Director – Arab Region, at APCO Worldwide, also agrees and sees relationships between non-Arab practitioners and their local counterparts as an advantage:

*“Arab colleagues are crucial in the mix – they of course have a better understanding of the target audience of our communications programmes for clients. Their knowledge of the mediascape is also stronger for obvious reasons. Very often, what I notice is that the team that we put together complements each other’s strengths and weaknesses. Asian or Western*

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<sup>66</sup> - In exchanged communication with Phillip Vosloo, Associate Director, Impact Porter Novelli, public relations agency, based in UAE. (03/02/2014)

*colleagues bring in crucial industry knowledge or processes orientation to a team, while Arab colleagues bring in the local insight.”<sup>67</sup>*

In summary, the findings of the present research support Kirat (2005a) in his findings that public relations departments in the region are not enjoying a good position in the hierarchy of the organisation. They are often marginalised and do not have direct access to the top management. For instance, in the case of ART, the head of public relations department is reporting to the managing director of marketing department and not to the CEO of the company. The finding of the present research also support the conclusion reached by Badran, Turk and Walters (2003) and Sriramesh and Verčič, (2009) that public relations consultancies based in the region offer services comparable to those services provided by smaller agencies operating anywhere else in the world. Nevertheless, the finding of the present research highlighted that both local and international agencies operating in KSA and UAE still face many challenges.

## **7.5. Conclusion**

This chapter of the research provided an overview of the growth and development of public relations in two Arab countries the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. To bring the current status of public relations in KSA and UAE closer, the researcher has spent substantial time collecting data related to the samples presented in this chapter. With his personal involvement in the business of public relations in the Arab Middle Eastern countries, the researcher has managed successfully to obtain the data needed and contacted the right sources.

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<sup>67</sup> - In exchanged communication with Elizabeth Sen, Deputy Managing Director – Arab Region, at APCO Worldwide and UAE. (11/02/2014)

The samples introduced show that both in-house public relations departments and public relations agencies in the region are offering a full-range of public relations services, including media relations, receptions, protocol and social activities, special events, advertising, promotion and public service campaigns. Add to this the rise of social media, which has radically transformed the communication landscape, demanding interactive engagement with customers. Nevertheless; public relations in both countries is often associated with ceremonies and advertising and public relations tasks are generally confined to answering media queries, handling ceremonial and administrative tasks, event planning, and receiving guests and delegations. Moreover; it is also safe to conclude that, while most local and international consultancies operating in the region enjoy a high level of professionalism, public relations departments are not enjoying a good position in the hierarchy of organisations. Public relations departments have little effective role in decision-making processes or developing general policies and strategic planning in institutions. The emphasis is on distributing news releases and achieving publicity.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: THE EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE**

### **8.1. Introduction**

In applying the quantitative and qualitative approaches to this study, two questionnaires were designed to produce quantitative data and determine how public relations practitioners demonstrate public relations models and public relations practitioners' roles in these two Arab countries. The qualitative approach was employed in the format of open statements discussed during semi-structured interviews with journalists based in KSA and UAE in order to understand their views on the profession of public relations in both countries. This chapter introduces the research's quantitative and qualitative methods' findings in terms of the models of public relations practised in KSA and UAE, the public relations practitioners' role in both countries, and the results of the interviews conducted with journalists based in KSA and UAE to explore their views on the performance of the public relation professionals in both countries.

### **8.2. Survey findings: public relations models**

The data from this questionnaire is based on 198 respondents (KSA n=74) (UAE n=124). All respondents work as public relations/corporate communications professionals in various types of organisations. 92% of respondents based in KSA were male and only 8% were female. 72% of respondents based in UAE were male and 28% were female. 87% of respondents based in KSA were in the age category 25-39 years, 88% of respondents based in UAE were in the 30-49 age categories.

	No of Resp.	Sex %		Age mean	L. of education %		
		M	F		BA	MA	other
KSA	74	92	08	25-49	55	4	15
UAE	124	28	72	24-49	72	18	34

	Experience (mean) yrs	Type of organization %			Job title %			Arab %	Non - Arab %
		Pub	Pri	NGO	J. staff	S. staff	Management		
KSA	2-10	68	32	-	40	18	16	74	26
UAE	5-15	17	82	1	51	41	32	34	66

(Table1) - Public relations models: demographic information

In terms of education, 55%, 04% and 15% of respondents based in KSA had BA, MA, and other degrees respectively. 72%, 18% and 34% of respondents based in UAE had BA, MA, and other degrees respectively. 32% of respondents based in KSA work in the private sector and 68% of respondents work in public sector organisations (government corporations and a government ministry). 82% of respondents based in UAE work in the private sector and 17% of respondents work in public sector organisations (government corporations and government ministries). The work experience mean for the respondents based in KSA is 8 years, while the work experience mean for the respondents based in UAE is 16 years. 74% of the respondents based in KSA are Arabs and 26% are non-Arabs. 34% of respondents based in UAE are Arabs and 66% are non-Arabs.

Public relations models investigated in this questionnaire (Table 1) include Grunig's (1984; 1992) original four public relations models (press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical models) and the two international models (personal influence and cultural interpreter models).

Grunig's (1984; 1992) original public relations models are based on the historical development of American public relations practices. The press agency and the public information models are considered as one-way models; the two-way asymmetrical and the two-way symmetrical models are considered as two-way models. The personal influence and the cultural interpreter models are identified from public relations practices in India and Greece respectively (Grunig, J., et al., 1995). Each of the six models of public relations had four statements that participants responded to as presented in Tables 1 to 6.

**a. Press agency/publicity model**

The press agency model uses persuasion and manipulation to influence audiences to behave as the organisation desires. It consists of four statements. 1) *The main purpose of my organisation/agency's public relations is to get publicity about my organisation/client.* 2) *In public relations we mostly attempt to get favourable publicity into the media and to keep unfavourable publicity out.* 3) *We determine how successful a programme is from the number of people who attend an event or use our products and services.* 4) *In my organisation/agency, public relations and publicity mean essentially the same thing.* This model shows the practice of organisations of spreading favourable information about themselves with only moderate concern for its accuracy.

Press Agency / Publicity model	Mean*	
1. The main purpose of my organisations public relations is to gain publicity for my organisation	KSA	4.10
	UAE	4.01
2. In public relations we mostly attempt to gain favourable publicity into the media and to keep unfavourable publicity out.	KSA	4.61
	UAE	4.03
3. We determine how successful a programme is from the number of people who attend an event or use our products and services.	KSA	4.82
	UAE	4.05
4. In my organisation, public relations and publicity mean essentially the same thing.	KSA	3.96
	UAE	3.07
Overall mean	KSA	4.37
	UAE	3.79

Table (2) - Press agency/publicity model

The survey results show that practitioners based in KSA thought publicity was an important part of public relations (m=4.37) while practitioners based in UAE seem to give this model less importance (m= 3.79). Nevertheless, the present study shows that the press agency/publicity is still one of the two most practiced models in KSA, but it is no longer the leading model in UAE public relations. The survey result also shows that the main purpose of public relations practitioners based in both KSA and UAE is to get publicity about an organisation/client (KSA m=4.10 and UAE m=4.01). Moreover, the respondents agree that public relations and publicity mean essentially the same thing in their organisations (KSA m=3.96 and UAE m=3.07). Item 2 in the press agency model “in public relations we mostly attempt to get favourable publicity into the media and to keep unfavourable publicity out.” indicates a comparatively high score (KSA m=4.61 and UAE m=4.03). This outcome suggests that most practitioners in both countries are trying to manipulate the dissemination of true information as a major public relations strategy.

## b. Public information model

The public information model shows that practitioners rely on truthful but one-way communication to inform the public about a situation or event. The public communication model consisted of the following statements. 1) *In public relations, nearly everyone is so busy writing news stories or producing publications that there is no time to do research.* 2) *In public relations, we disseminate accurate information but do not volunteer unfavourable information.* 3) *Keeping a clippings file is about the only way we have to determine the success of a programme.* 4) *In my organisation/agency, public relations is more of a neutral disseminator of information than an advocate for the organisation or mediator between management and publics.*

Public information model		
1. In public relations, nearly everyone is so busy writing news stories or producing publications that there is no time to do research.	KSA	4.22
	UAE	3.18
2. In public relations, we disseminate accurate information but do not volunteer unfavourable information.	KSA	3.87
	UAE	4.90
3. Keeping a clipping file is about the only way we have to determine the success of a programme.	KSA	3.10
	UAE	2.16
4. In my organisation, public relations is more of a neutral disseminator of information than an advocate for the organisation or mediator between management and publics.	KSA	4.70
	UAE	3.70
Overall mean	KSA	3.97
	UAE	3.48

Table (3) - Public information model

The survey results show that this model scored a mean of 3.97 in KSA and 3.48 in UAE which is high, among the four models. This result illustrates the belief of respondents that they are spending most of their time just giving out news releases. They believe also that accurate information could be given without volunteering unfavourable facts about their organisation/client (KSA  $m=3.87$  and UAE  $m=4.90$ ). This shows that practitioners in both



countries work to gain favourable publicity into the media and to keep unfavourable publicity out.

These observations suggest that protecting organisations/clients' interests is a leading principle for public relations practitioners in KSA and greater in UAE. Perhaps, one of the most important results in this section is that practitioners based in both KSA and UAE give a high mean (KSA  $m=4.70$  and UAE  $m=3.70$ ) to item 4, and therefore agree that in their organisation/agency, public relations is more of a neutral disseminator of information than an advocate for the organisation or mediator between management and publics.

**c. Two-way asymmetrical model**

The two-way asymmetrical model shows that practitioners are involved in research but use information from such research to benefit the organisation and not the publics. The model consisted of the following statements. *1) After completing a public relations programme, we do research to determine how effective the programme has been in changing people's attitudes. 2) In public relations, our broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as the organisation wants them to behave. 3) Before starting a public relations programme, we look at attitude surveys to make sure we describe the organisation in ways our publics would be most likely to accept. 4) Before beginning a programme, we do research to determine public attitudes toward the organisation and how they might change.*

Two-way asymmetrical model		
1. After completing a public relations programme, we do research to determine how effective the programme has been in changing people's attitudes.	KSA	1.40
	UAE	1.70
2. In public relations, our broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as the organisation wants them to behaviour.	KSA	4.30
	UAE	4.22
3. Before starting a public relations programme, we look at attitude surveys to make sure we describe the organisation in ways our publics would be most likely to accept.	KSA	1.13
	UAE	2.22
4. Before beginning a programme, we do research to determine public attitudes toward the organisation and how they might change.	KSA	1.20
	UAE	2.82
Overall mean	KSA	2.00
	UAE	2.74

Table (4) Two-way asymmetrical model

In the present research, this model had a very low score amongst the models practiced in KSA with a mean of only 2.00. In contrast the score for this model was higher (m=2.74) in UAE. The result in this section shows item 2 scores high mean (KSA m=4.30 and UAE m=4.22) that shows clearly that in public relations, the broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as the organisation wants them to behave. Respondents in both KSA and UAE agree that they conduct little research in planning, executing, and evaluating their work. Item 3 scores high (KSA m=4.70 and UAE m=3.70). The mean for the statement “before starting a public relations programme, we look at attitude surveys to make sure we describe the organisation in ways our publics would be most likely to accept” was low in both countries (KSA m=1.13 and UAE m=2.22). The result was similar for the statement “before beginning a programme, we do research to determine public attitudes toward the organisation and how they might change” (KSA m=1.20 and UAE m=2.82).

#### d. Two-way symmetrical model

The two-way symmetrical model seeks to create a win-win situation for the organisation and its publics. The model consisted of the following statements. 1) *The purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and publics the organisation affects.* 2) *Before starting a programme, we do surveys or informal research to find out how much management and our publics understand each other.* 3) *The purpose of public relations is to change the attitudes and behaviour of management as much as it is to change the attitudes and behaviour of publics.* 4) *Our organisation/agency believes public relations should provide mediation for the organisation, to help management and publics negotiate conflicts.*

Two-way symmetrical model		
1. The purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and publics the organisation affects.	KSA	3.10
	UAE	4.17
2. Before starting a programme, we do surveys or informal research to find out how much management and our publics understand each other.	KSA	1.14
	UAE	2.40
3. The purpose of public relations is to change the attitudes and behaviour of management as much as it is to change the attitudes and behaviour of publics.	KSA	2.30
	UAE	2.18
4. Our organisation believes public relations should provide mediation for the organisation, to help management and publics negotiate conflicts.	KSA	2.12
	UAE	2.94
Overall mean	KSA	2.16
	UAE	2.92

Table (5) - Two-way symmetrical model

The two-way symmetrical model of public relations seeks mutual understanding between the organisation and its publics. It is considered by James Grunig to be the most ethical model. The present research shows that public relations practitioners in both KSA and UAE had less preference for this model compared to the rest of Grunig's four models. This model also scored low results (KSA  $m=2.16$  and UAE  $m=2.92$ ). Looking at the overall scores, it is

evident that respondents are less conscious about their role as communication facilitators and mediators. Respondents stated that the dominant coalition of their organisation does not actively seek their professional opinion in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, the result shows that practitioners in both KSA and UAE appreciate that “the purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and publics the organisation affects”. The mean for this statement was KSA  $m=2.16$  and UAE  $m=2.92$ . In contrast, practitioners agreed here again that they conduct little research. In response to the statement “before starting a programme, we do surveys or informal research to find out how much management and our publics understand each other”, the mean was very low (KSA  $m=1.14$  and UAE  $m=2.40$ ).

Generally, among Grunig’s (1984; 1992) original four public relations models, press agency/public information scored the highest in practise in both KSA and UAE (press agency model  $m=4.37$  in KSA and  $m=3.79$  in UAE and public information  $m=3.97$  in KSA and  $m=3.48$  in KSA). This shows that media relations is central to the practice of public relations in both countries. Practitioners consider media relations very important to the practice of public relations. This is, for instance, reflected in the score for the item, “in public relations, public relations practitioners should attempt to get favourable publicity into the media and to keep unfavourable publicity out” (KSA  $m=3.87$  and UAE  $m=4.90$ ).

#### **e. Personal influence model**

The personal influence model exists in some nations where practitioners cultivate good relationships with journalists and government officials with a view to advancing the interests of the organisation. This model consisted of the following statements. 1) *Having good*

*interpersonal relationships with other employees in my organisation is very important for PR practitioners. 2) Having good interpersonal relationships with people outside my organisation is very important for PR practitioners. 3) Socialising is one of the most important activities for a PR practitioner. 4) The best way to being successful at PR is to provide benefits (dinner, gifts) to gain influence with personal contacts.*

Personal influence model		
1. Having good interpersonal relationships with other employees in my organisation is very important for PR practitioners.	KSA	3.75
	UAE	4.90
2. Having good interpersonal relationships with people outside my organisation is very important for PR practitioners.	KSA	4.72
	UAE	4.75
3. Socializing is one of the most important activities for a PR practitioner.	KSA	4.78
	UAE	4.32
4. The best way to being successful at PR is to provide benefits (dinner, gifts) to gain influence with personal contacts.	KSA	4.85
	UAE	4.18
Overall mean	KSA	4.52
	UAE	4.48

Table (6) - Personal influence model

In reviewing the practitioner responses to the personal influence model, it became evident that relationship building is important for public relations practice in KSA and UAE. The survey shows the highest mean scores on the questions about personal relationships inside and outside the organisation (KSA  $m=4.52$  and UAE  $m=4.48$ ). This data shows that “having good interpersonal relationships with other employees inside the organisation” (KSA  $m=3.75$  and UAE  $m=4.90$ ) and “with people outside the organisation” (KSA  $m=4.72$  and UAE  $m=4.75$ ) is very important for public relations practitioners. The results show also that the mean for the statement “the best way to being successful at public relations is to provide benefits (dinner, gifts) to gain influence with personal contacts” has scored the highest for practitioners based in KSA ( $m=4.85$ ), but a little bit less for practitioners based in UAE ( $m=4.18$ ).

**f. Cultural interpreter model**

The cultural interpreter model exists where practitioners act as mediators between their own culture and their international clients (Wu, Taylor and Chen, 2001). The model consisted of the following statements. 1) *Understanding a second language is important for a PR practitioner.* 2) *Providing services to international clients is an important part of my job.* 3) *Helping my international clients understand the local business environment is important.* 4) *Introducing my international clients to important local people is important.*

Cultural interpreter model		
1. Understanding a second language is important for a PR practitioner.	KSA	4.92
	UAE	4.95
2. Providing services to international clients is an important part of my job.	KSA	4.63
	UAE	4.93
3. Helping my international clients understand the local business environment is important.	KSA	4.98
	UAE	4.99
4. Introducing my international clients to important local people is important.	KSA	4.89
	UAE	4.98
Overall mean	KSA	3.62
	UAE	4.96

Table (7) - Cultural interpreter model

The cultural interpreter model is the most frequently practiced public relations model reported in KSA (m=4.85) and UAE (m=4.96). In both countries, practitioners understand the importance of a second language for a public relations practitioner, as well as the importance of providing services to international clients, and the importance of Introducing international clients to the local business environment and people.

### 8.3. Survey findings: public relations practitioners' roles

The data for this questionnaire are presented in *Table 2* and based on 144 respondents (KSA n=65, UAE n=79). All respondents work as public relations/corporate communications professionals in various types of organisations. 91% of respondents based in KSA were male and only 9% were female. 67% of respondents based in UAE were male and 33% were female. 87% of respondents based in KSA were in the age category 25-39 years old, 88% of respondents based in UAE were in the age category 30-49 years.

	No of Resp.	Sex %		Age mean	L. of education %		
		M	F		BA	MA	other
KSA	65	91	09	25-49	46	8	11
UAE	79	33	67	24-49	52	12	15

	Experience (mean) yrs	Type of organization %			Job title %			Arab %	Non - Arab
		Pub	Pri	NGO	J. staff	S. staff	Management		
KSA	2-10	76	23	-	41	27	32	77	23
UAE	5-15	34	66	-	31	54	15	34	66

*Table (8) - PRPs' roles in KSA and UAE: demographic information*

In terms of education, 46%, 08% and 11% of respondents based in KSA had BA, MA, and other degrees respectively. 52%, 12% and 15% of respondents based in UAE had BA, MA, and other degrees respectively. 23% of respondents based in KSA worked in the private sector (PR agency, private consulting, or independent public relations practice), and 76% of respondents worked in public sector organisations (government corporations and a government ministry). 66% of respondents based in UAE worked in the private sector (PR agency, private consulting, or independent public relations practice), and 34% of respondents

work in public sector organisations (government corporations and a government ministry). The work experience mean for the respondents based in KSA is 6 years, while the work experience mean for the respondents based in UAE is 12 years. 77% of the respondents based in KSA are Arab and 23% are non-Arab. 34% of respondents based in UAE are Arab and 66% are non-Arab.

Public relations roles investigated in this questionnaire include *manager* and *technician* roles, as developed by Broom and Dozier (1986) and the third role for public relations introduced by Moss (1999), namely the *strategist*. Broom and Dozier (1986) developed four roles of public relations: *expert prescriber*, the authority on public relations and its inherent problems; *communication facilitator*, relationship builder and communicator between the organisation and its publics; *problem-solving process facilitator*, the strategic management position involved in organisational problem solving; and the *communication technician*, a technical, lower-level role responsible for producing communication materials for the public relations effort. Broom and Dozier (1986) suggest that a single practitioner would enact all four roles at various times. Lauzen (1992) later explained that Dozier (1983) found public relations practitioners played only two dominant roles, so he distilled the roles into *managers* and *technicians* (p.63). Moss (1999) introduced a third role for public relations, namely the *strategist*. A public relations strategist provides the focus and direction for an organisation's communication with its stakeholders and other interest groups in society.

17 items representing public relations activities measured the three public relations roles. *Technician* role's items are: *to keep a media clipping service (clip articles that appeared in the media about the organisation)*; *to organise special events (e.g. exhibitions/gala evenings)*; *to produce audio-visual materials for presentations*; *to write articles for the*



*organisation's publications; to edit public relations materials (e.g. speeches/the annual report); and to generate publicity (e.g. write media releases).*

*Manager role's items are: to take responsibility for the success or the failure of public relations plans; to develop public relations strategy that supports corporate strategy; to manage the implementation of public relations plans; to take responsibility for the success or the failure of public relations strategy; and to monitor the performance of public relations practitioners/subdivisions.*

*Strategist role's items are: to explain to top management the impact of their behaviour on key external publics; to act as an early warning system to top management before issues in society erupt into a crisis for the organisation; to act as an advocate for key internal public by explaining their views to top management; to act as an advocate for key external public by explaining their views to top management; to express the company's stance on social responsibility to society in order to gain public trust; and to explain to top management the impact of the organisations behaviour on society.*

#### ***a. Technician's role***

The technician roles scored the highest means of the three roles in both KSA (m=3.9) and UAE (m=4.1). The respondents based in KSA agreed by m=4.5 and UAE m=3.9 that the current activities performed by the public relations department are to generate publicity for the organisation. Furthermore m=3.1 of respondents in KSA agreed that their activities included the writing of articles for the organisation's publications. Nearly the same number of respondents in UAE agreed (m=3.7).

Technician Roles			
Q1	To keep a media clipping service (clip articles that appeared in the media about the organisation)	KSA	4.2
		UAE	3.7
Q2	To organise special events (e.g. exhibitions/gala evenings).	KSA	4.3
		UAE	4.5
Q4	To produce audio-visual materials for presentations.	KSA	3.2
		UAE	4.1
Q6	To write articles for the organisation's publications.	KSA	3.1
		UAE	3.7
Q9	To edit public relations materials (e.g. speeches/the annual report).	KSA	4.3
		UAE	4.6
Q10	To generate publicity (e.g. write media releases).	KSA	4.5
		UAE	4.1
Over all mean		KSA	3.9
		UAE	4.1

Table (9) – Technician's roles

Most of the respondents also agreed that editing material and keeping a media clipping service were part of their current activities in the public relations department in their organisations. It is clear from the above that the current activities fulfilled by public relations practitioners are focused on generating publicity by writing and editing material on behalf of the organisation. The result of this role shows that public relations practitioners in both KSA and UAE are engaged in media relations activities more than any other roles.

## b) Manager's roles

Manager Roles			
Q3	To take responsibility for the success or the failure of public relations plans.	KSA	3.1
		UAE	3.9
Q5	To develop public relations strategy that supports corporate strategy.	KSA	1.2
		UAE	2.8
Q7	To manage the implementation of public relations plans	KSA	2.6
		UAE	3.2
Q8	To take responsibility for the success or the failure of public relations strategy.	KSA	2.5
		UAE	3.3
Q11	To monitor the performance of public relations practitioners / subdivisions.	KSA	2.6
		UAE	4.2
Over all mean		KSA	2.4
		UAE	3.4

Table (10) – Manager’s roles

Manager role’s items scored reasonably over all means in UAE, (m=3.4) and lower in KSA (m=2.4), while respondents in both countries agreed that the public relations department took responsibility for the success or failure of the public relations strategy in the organisation (KSA m=3.1 and UAE m=3.9), they reported lower means (KSA m=1.2 and UAE m=2.8) for the item, “public relations department develop public relations strategies that support corporate strategy”. For the item “to take responsibility for the success or the failure of public relations strategy”, practitioners scored a higher mean in UAE (m=3.9), while the mean was only m=3.1 for the practitioners based in KSA.

### c) Strategist's Roles

Strategist Roles			
Q12	To explain to top management the impact of their behaviour on key external publics	KSA	1.1
		UAE	2.2
Q13	To act as an early warning system to top management before issues in society erupt into a crisis for the organization	KSA	1.2
		UAE	2.6
Q14	To act as an advocate for key internal public by explaining their views to top management	KSA	1.3
		UAE	1.9
Q16	To act as an advocate for key external public by explaining their views to top management	KSA	1.1
		UAE	2.4
Q15	To express the company's stance on social responsibility to society in order to gain public trust	KSA	2.1
		UAE	2.9
Q17	To explain to top management the impact of the organizations behaviour on society	KSA	1.3
		UAE	2.6
Over all mean		KSA	1.3
		UAE	2.4

Table (11) Strategist's Roles

The strategist items scored the lowest means, with only an overall mean of  $m=1.3$  in KSA and  $m=2.4$  in UAE. Nevertheless, the respondents in both KSA and UAE scored reasonable means (KSA  $m=2.1$  and UAE  $m=2.9$ ) for the item "to express the company's stance on social responsibility to society in order to gain public trust". Practitioners in KSA scored a very low mean ( $m=1.2$ ) on the item "to act as an early warning system to top management before issues in society erupt into a crisis for the organisation", while the practitioners based in UAE scored more ( $m=2.6$ ). Practitioners in both countries scored low on the item "to act as an advocate for key external public by explaining their views to top management" (KSA  $m=1.1$  and UAE  $m=2.4$ ). The result for the strategist role shows that public relations practitioners in Saudi Arabia hardly practice any strategic role. In contrast, public relations practitioners based in UAE practice a very limited role at the strategic level.

#### 8.4. Interviews findings: journalists' views on PR practice in KSA and UAE

This part of the present study aims to examine the journalists' opinions on the performance of public relations practitioners. How do journalists perceive, evaluate and view practitioners' roles, methods, relationship, and quality of media reporting on organisations? The significance of this study stems from the fact that public relations practitioners rely so heavily on the media, particularly journalists, to deliver their messages to targeted publics. Therefore, a scrutiny of the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners should reveal further views of the public relations practice in KSA and UAE. The group of interviewees was composed of 26 journalists based in KSA (n=15) and UAE (n=11). All journalists are working full time with media outlets based in KSA and UAE. 13 journalists based in KSA are Arab and two are non-Arab. 7 journalists based in UAE are Arab, and four are non- Arab.

	No of Resp	Sex %		Age mean	L. of education %				Experience (mean) yrs	Arab	Non - Arab
		M	F		BA	MA	other				
KSA	15	14	1	25-49	12	3	*	KSA	2-10	13	2
UAE	11	8	3	25-49	9	2	*	UAE	5-15	6	5

Table (12) Interviews with journalists in KSA and UAE: demographic information

To qualitatively investigate the journalists' opinions on the performance of public relations practitioners in both KSA and UAE, nine questions/statements were discussed with journalists in three categories of functions; the practitioners as the source of messages (messenger), the message (press materials) and the communication channels.

**1) The practitioners measured by the following statements:**

- a) Public relations practitioners are helpful to journalists for informative, complete, timely news.
- b) Public relations practitioners are honest with journalists.
- c) Public relations practitioners understand the problems journalists encounter such as meeting deadlines, space limitations.
- d) Journalists can trust public relations practitioners.
- e) Public relations departments supply media with newsworthy materials.

**2) The message measured by discussing the following subjects:**

- a) Media materials sent by public relations departments are well written and edited.
- b) Materials sent by public relations departments are usually relevant to my media outlet.
- c) Materials sent by public relations departments are usually relevant to the beat I cover.

**3) The channels measured by discussing:**

- a) What are the best channels journalists prefer to use in communicating with public relations practitioners?
- b) How has the new e-communication helped or hindered the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners?

**8.4.1. Journalists' perception of PRPs**

The first section of the interview aims to understand the journalists' perception of the public relations practitioners as professionals who are in daily contact with the media. When journalists were asked if the public relations practitioners are helpful to journalists for informative, complete, and timely news, the discussions revealed that public relations

practitioners still have a long way to go to understand how and why the media work the way they do. Respondent No. 1 (based in KSA) stated that:

*“PR departments in Saudi Arabia as well as in UAE do not understand the need for accurate, informative, well-written press releases. They then wonder why their clients receive little to no coverage in our press”.*

Respondent No. 5 (based in UAE) stated that:

*“PR practitioners work on a set agenda; not to rub their clients or journalists the wrong way. Hence they ought to be diplomatic, which normally will not serve the purpose of journalists who look for news”.*

During a long discussion with a journalist No. 13 (based in KSA) she said:

*“From my experience with our publication, we’ve faced a lot of problems working with in-house PR departments. Most times, it is just easier contacting the key person directly through his secretary and once he is aware of what we are looking for, it gets done faster. If we were to approach the PR department directly nine times out of ten, we’d be postponing stories as deadlines wouldn’t be met”.*

She added:

*“Depends what you want. If you’re publishing something in the PR’s interest, they ought to be helpful, but it is often required for them to hinder, delay or mitigate what may be considered ‘bad’ news”.*

Interviewee No. 9 (based in UAE) tried to explain the reasons behind the lack of accuracy and stated:

*“I assume that PR is in a difficult position as very often it is near impossible to gain full, accurate and relevant information on time. So when the information is finally there, it is such a rush to get it out that accuracy goes out of the window”.*

Journalist No. 11 (from UAE) sees that the lack of accuracy is related to the lack of research:

*“I think that PRPs in this country do not conduct much research and do not pay enough attention to the accuracy of the information they disseminate to journalists.”*

When journalists were asked if public relations practitioners are honest with them, the outcomes of all interviews and discussions show that Journalists distrust public relations practitioners because they feel that public relations professionals are generally trying to cover up or put a spin on things. Participant No. 7 (based in UAE) said:



*“A good PR’s job is to flex the truth into deceptive shapes. Honesty should not be part of that process. A good PR will never lie, simply colour the truth”.*

Participant No. 5 (based in KSA) agreed, and asserted that:

*“I do not trust the staff of public relations because they often tell a half-truth. Public relations practitioners do not seek to build a relationship of mutual trust with journalists therefore the relationship is often unhealthy.”*

Journalist No. 10 (based in UAE) triggered an interesting point by suggesting that:

*“I find a huge difference between the public relations practitioners of foreigners and their counterpart Arabs. Non- Arab PRPs, especially Westerners are more serious, professional, and committed to their work.”*

One more point of view was raised here, when a journalist, No. 9 (based in UAE) said:

*“I think PRPs in this region need to fix their relationship with their own bosses, often we notice contradiction between what PRPs announce, and what decision-makers reveal. This kind of unhealthy relationship within the same origination does not help any party of the origination’s stakeholders, journalists in particular.”*

Generally, journalists involved with this study feel that public relations practitioners need to have a better understanding of how media organisations operate, including management

structure, job assignments and deadlines. They also expressed the need for practitioners to have a generally better understanding of what the individual journalist covers on a regular basis. Many of the journalists indicated that they had, however, had positive experiences with individual public relations practitioners, but for the most part their impression of public relations practitioners was negative, indicating that public relations practitioners who were effective at media relations are the exception, not the rule.

Moreover, journalists asserted throughout the discussion that a greater understanding of journalistic work by public relations practitioners would greatly improve journalists' perceptions of the relationship between the two groups. Journalists want public relations practitioners to consider the information they are disseminating, and target it directly toward the appropriate individual. What journalists do not want, is to receive large amounts of information for which they have little use. In other words, journalists want public relations practitioners to do their 'homework', both on the information they are disseminating, as well as on the individual to whom the information is sent. This seems to be the major complaint of journalists about public relations.

#### **8.4.2. Journalists' perception of media materials**

The second section of the interviews focused on the media materials produced and released by the public relations departments to the media. First, journalists were asked if public relations departments supply media with newsworthy materials. In their responses, journalists tend to disagree and suggest that, in principle, media material sent by public relations departments or agencies can be both newsworthy and informative. So, for example, universities, public agencies or research institutes often use their public relations departments

to publicise new research findings, and these may well be of general interest rather than simply self-serving. However, there are also occasions when material with no news value seeps into mainstream news. These views coincide with the opinion of some journalists that the “news values” of practitioners are opposed to their own. According to one respondent (No. 1, based in KSA), *“public relations officials think about the needs of their organisation first and less about what journalists need”*. Another respondent (No. 5, based in UAE) accused public relations practitioners of *“hiding valuable information, not being objective, and not focused on the public interest rather than on their own company or client’s interests”*. He added, *“press releases I receive are often promotional, too frequently rely on industry jargon, and with zero news value.”*

When asked about the quality of the media materials produced and released by public relations departments, in most of their comments journalists appear to demand information from public relations departments that is fast, reliable, and direct. A respondent (No. 6, based in KSA) advises, *“do not waste your time on polished releases; I would rather receive news/ideas sooner (as simple text in an email) than have you polish the release”*. Another journalist (No. 2, based in UAE) took it a step further, *“I always think they’d be better off sending a list of names, facts, figures and salient quotes”*. In general, journalists believe that public relations draws attention to irrelevant and trivial events. Nearly every editor and reporter complains that the writing quality of the public relations materials has deteriorated to a dangerous level with many releases lacking clarity, brevity and directness. Journalist No. 11 (based in UAE) complained that:

*“Press releases I receive are often poor in terms of language and uninformative in terms of content. I receive dozens of press releases every day,*

*very few get published.... In most case it is waste of time, materials, and effort.”*

Journalist No. 1 (based in UAE) brought the discussion to a very interesting point:

*“I was very surprised when a local public relations staff told me that press releases produced in his department are often written first in English and then translated into Arabic.... This maybe explains why the Arabic press releases are often weak in Arabic language and badly constructed.”*

In response to the question of whether those materials are relevant to the type of media outlet the journalist works for or to the beat covered by the journalist, only a few interviewees agree that the media materials received from public relations departments/agencies are relevant to their media outlet’s activities. Participant No. 14 (based in KSA) stated:

*“I have very little respect for most PR people I’ve worked with, simply because 90% of the press releases I receive are irrelevant to my magazine, and even if I send them our editorial map, editorial policy – I still get sent these.”*

Another journalist (No. 8, based in UAE) confirmed:

*“I regularly receive at least 20 emails per day – 95% of which are irrelevant to the subjects our title covers. They are plainly sent under a ‘blanket marketing policy’ and the PR practitioners who send them are clearly not researching the target audience of the titles we publish to see what our editorial policy is”.*

Another journalist (No. 4, based in KSA) commented, “*most of them have no clue, they do not know the difference between newspaper and newswire*”.

A significant proportion of subjects commented that public relations practitioners should not approach journalists unless the story is relevant to the publication and will be of interest to readers. In other words, practitioners should thoroughly research the media as well as their client.

These reactions from respondents show that journalists appreciate knowledgeable practitioners who steer them in the right direction and save the journalist time in reporting a story. In contrast, the findings show the frustration among journalists towards public relations practitioners who do not seem to understand how the media works. This can lead to both a negative relationship between a journalist and particular PR practitioners, and can contribute to a negative perception of the PR industry in general. In summary, after meeting with a number of journalists based in KSA and UAE, the research found that journalists consider news values as the most important aspect in journalism practices when assessing public relations materials.

#### **8.4.3. Journalists’ perception of communication channels**

The third part of the interview focused on the communication channels PR practitioners and journalist are using to communicate with each other. In response to the questions related to the usage of the electronic media and whether public relations practitioners are using emails as a primary channel to communicate with journalists, the findings confirm that the evolution of technology continues to affect public relations and media practices. In their comments on

this part of the interview, most journalists appeared to complain that public relations departments ‘bombard’ them with the same news releases in both languages and through all communication channels. Respondent No. 10 (based in UAE) said, *“PR staff send me press releases in Arabic although I do not read Arabic and I work for a non-Arabic publication”*. Another journalist (No. 7, based in UAE) sees what PR departments do as *“a show off, to show their clients that they do a good job on his behalf”*. A number of journalists consider what PR departments are doing by re-sending the same material through many channels as a *“waste of time, effort, and resources”*.

In this section, the study found that a significant proportion of the participants agree that the greatest change in public relations practice due to new Internet technology is the ability to access corporate news and contact information online 24 hours a day. Nevertheless, some journalists stated that the increasing desire to work via e-mail without any human contact makes it harder to build personal relationships with public relations practitioners.

In general, journalists in both KSA and UAE tend to prefer the communication channels that build a personal relationship, so that public relations practitioners know their preferences and interests, and being a trusting and reliable source to them can go a long way. One journalist (No. 2, based in UAE) stated that:

*“We prefer direct communication with public relations practitioners because it helps us in building a mutual trust and helps all parties in understanding each other’s work.”*

Another participant (No. 2, based in KSA) said:

*“Interpersonal communication makes me feel that I am communicating with real people, not machines without soul or personality. Getting to know the public relations practitioner in person helps parties to appreciate and understand the interests of each other.”*

The interviewees show clearly that journalists appreciate interpersonal communication as the best way to build a mutual understanding between themselves and public relations practitioners. A journalist (No. 7, based in UAE) asserted that:

*“It is necessary for any relationship to start with interpersonal communication; it is a key start for all other forms of communications, and it is more acceptable and effective.”*

Another interviewee (No. 15, based in KSA) said:

*“Interpersonal communication removes a lot of misunderstanding and is beneficial to all parties. Direct communication is an essential among people, especially in an environment such as the Arab society.”*

The majority of the journalists confirmed that PR practitioners should have the mission to set a good communication relationship with the press and to meet the journalists' information needs. Relating these attitudes to an increase in positive evaluation, the explanation that

emerges has to do with the growing flow of information and of the quality of the materials that the PR practitioners hand out to the press.

## **8.5. Conclusion**

In applying the quantitative and qualitative approaches to this study, the fieldwork conducted produced quantitative data that shows how public relations practitioners demonstrate public relations model's roles in two Arab countries, and the results of the interviews conducted with journalists based in KSA and UAE show their views on the performance of the public relation professionals in both countries. No doubt, these findings strongly reflect the surrounding culture, which is believed to have a tendency toward interpersonal communication and social interaction rather than other ways of indirect communication.

The next chapter explains the correlation relationship between the socio-cultural environmental factors and the public relations model's roles practiced in KSA and UAE.



## **CHAPTER NINE: EVALUATION OF FINDINGS**

### **9.1. Introduction**

The intention of the present study is to examine the socioeconomic and political challenges that are expected to influence the development of public relations in KSA and UAE. The investigation's aim is to answer three questions:

- Which models of public relations are practiced in KSA and UAE?
- Which roles are practiced by public relations practitioners in KSA and UAE?
- What are the socio-cultural, political, and economic factors that determine public relations models and roles practiced in KSA and UAE?

Answering these questions might reveal the influence of the societal-cultural values on the practice of public relations models and public relations practitioners' roles practiced in these two Arab countries. To better understand the link between public relations and culture, scholars explored the quantitative relationship between Hofstede's dimensions of culture and the four models of public relations. Scholars find that these cultural dimensions influence individuals' as well as societies' communication. Sriramesh and White (1992) contend that "because a society's culture affects the pattern of communication among members of a society, it also should have a direct impact on the public relations practice of organisations because public relations is first and foremost a communication activity" (p.597). Grunig and Hunt (1984) saw this relationship when they defined public relations as "the management of communication between an organisation and its publics" (p.8), which will therefore affect the functioning of any organisation.

## **9.2. Public relations models practiced in KSA and UAE**

Looking at the demographic information generated by the present survey, it is clear that the public relations profession is male dominated in KSA. 92% of respondents to this questionnaire were male. In contrast 72% of respondents based in UAE were female. These figures can be better understood by taking into consideration the following notes. 1) According to a survey conducted by the global consulting company Booz and Co., nearly half of the Saudi population is female and 56.5 percent of the Kingdom's women hold university degrees. However, just 14 percent of the women are in the workforce. 2) It is highly restricted for foreign or single women to travel or work in KSA. 3) The perception of public relations as a profession is still misunderstood, therefore Saudi women are not encouraged to join the field. 4) By law and custom, Saudi women cannot travel within or outside the country without a male relative. 5) International public relations firms find it difficult to set up branches in KSA.

As Saudi women strive to excel in the PR field, their society's norms and traditions put obstacles in their way. In Saudi culture, a woman's primary role is to be "a nurturing mother and a loving housewife" (Balaa, n.d.) and "it is difficult to even prioritise the long list of challenges facing Saudi women, which range from their political and legal disenfranchisement to their curtailed liberties and restraints imposed by their legal guardians" (Al Mohamed, 2008). Women's lack of mobility is a major point of contention in the Kingdom, as they are not allowed to drive a car. They are not allowed to travel abroad by airplane without the express permission of a male guardian and their right to travel internally, without a guardian's permission, is subject to the arbitrary approval of airport personnel. When it comes to civil rights, women were not permitted to vote in Saudi Arabia's first

elections for municipal councils, yet a number of women put their names forward as candidates and expectations are high for women's inclusion in future elections (Crystal, 2005). Moreover, PR's perception and image as a profession is not accepted widely, therefore Saudi women are not encouraged to join the field.

Nevertheless, Saudi women have entered PR, encouraged by successful experiences of pioneer practitioners. Most have not ventured into the private sector and prefer to work with government and charity organisations (Arab News, 2013). Samar Fatany has made significant contributions and has been involved in activities aimed at fighting extremism and enhancing women's role in serving society. She has published three books: '*Saudi Perceptions and Western Misconceptions*,' '*Saudi Women towards a new era*' and '*Saudi Challenges and Reforms*.' Another leading practitioner is Sarah Al Ayed, Associate Director and Managing Partner of the Saudi Arabia office of the TRACCS network. She is also the vice president of the International Public Relations Association – Gulf Chapter (IPRA-GC). In February 2014, the women empowerment initiative of the Alwaleed bin Talal Foundation, 'Hama' sponsored the PR and Media Diploma in partnership with the Riyadh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI). The diploma is a one-year academic programme that aims to enable female Saudi professionals to enter the media and PR. Its curriculum includes communications tools, PR management, media planning, media campaigns, media impact, social media and media relations (Arab News, 2014).

In contrast, opportunities for women are growing in government service, education, private business, and health services in the United Arab Emirates. According to the Ministry of Planning, female citizens constitute approximately 26 percent of the national workforce, an 11 percent rise over the past 10 years. The government publicly encouraged female citizens

to join the workforce and ensured public sector employment for all that applied. According to government statistics, women comprised approximately 42 percent of all employees in education, 34 percent in the health sector, 20 percent in social affairs, 28 percent of all civil servants, and 57 percent of citizens working in banking and financial services. UAE has a select group of public and private sector organisations with international public relations standards as manifested in the conceptions and practices of the profession. The UAE is also the regional headquarters of scores of international public relations firms that offer a wide range of consultancy services to clients from the public and private sectors (Ayish, 2004). This is to reflect, to some extent, a major influence of the political, societal, and cultural values on the public relations profession in KSA and UAE. Today, more than 300 female students are studying public relations in UAE University and the majority of mass communication students are female - there were over 300 female students and 36 male students in 2010. So, female alumni and public relations practitioners are spreading in the UAE faster than male practitioners. Nevertheless, Al-Jenaibi (2011) asserted that the difficulties women face working in public relations in UAE are related tremendously to the socio-economic, educational, and cultural development of the country.

The results of this study have identified two characteristics of public relations models practices in KSA and UAE. Instead of Grunig's (1984; 1992) four original public relations models, the two international public relations models, the *cultural interpreter* model and the *personal influence* model, are the most frequently practiced models in both KSA and UAE. This result is consistent, and matches the findings in Kruckeberg's work (1996) when he examined the public relations models practice in the Arab countries in contrast with the models practiced in the US and Western countries. Kruckeberg (1996) suggested that many of the values of Middle Eastern culture are distinctly non-Western and Middle Eastern culture

in some ways does not lend itself to Western public relations practices. Kruckeberg (1996) asserted that:

*“The models used in that geo-political region are not identical to US models, or to those in other Western countries. In particular, Moslem culture heavily influences much of Middle East practice... research that examined select internal departments and public relations agencies that were reputed to be high-quality and professional in the United Arab Emirates suggested that, public relations firms used one-way asymmetrical press agency and public information models of public relations. Meanwhile, qualitative research suggested that internal public relations departments in most of the government units most closely resembled a ‘two-way symmetrical’ model or at the least a ‘mixed-motive’ model.”*

Moreover; Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2005) and Zaharna (1995) found that the Arab public relations model involves relationship-building and the process of public relations, involves communication as a social ritual, rather than communication as transmission of information; it involves interpersonal communication, rather than mass communication. It also involves relationship-building, as opposed to persuasion.

It is clear that public relations practitioners based in KSA and UAE are aware of Grunig’s four models and are practising those four models variously and unevenly. But they are intend to practice the other international models (personal influence and cultural interpreter models) more, as these two models suit or fit the type of culture and business environment dominant in both countries. For example, a study of UAE practitioners found that they view public

relations not as a communications function but as a social relations one, placing a great deal of emphasis on receiving delegations (Creedon, Al-Khaja and Kruckeberg, 1995).

Thus, the present study found that the cultural interpreter model is the most frequently practiced public relations model reported in UAE ( $m= 4.96$ ), and the second most frequently practiced model is the personal influence model ( $m= 4.48$ ). In contrast, practitioners in KSA are practising the personal influence model the most ( $m=4.85$ ) and the cultural interpreter model comes next ( $m= 4.52$ ). Practitioners in UAE use the cultural interpreter model as more international companies based in both countries have attracted more international PR agencies to establish offices locally, therefore they use local public relations practitioners as cultural interpreters. The result of the present study shows that the cultural interpreter model is also widely practiced in KSA, where public relations companies are using locals as token account handlers and translators. Grunig, J., et al. (1995) suggested that this model generally exists in multinational companies and in organisations that do business in another country, and require someone who understands the language, culture, custom, and political system of the host country.

Grunig, J., et al. (1995) proposes that the cultural interpreter model may also be found in an organisation within a single country that works in an environment with diverse groups. He added that international public relations companies with offices in several different countries typically hire citizens of those countries to staff the firms; likewise, in the United States, foreign companies hire Americans for public relations work. Peterson (2004) noted that “cultural interpreting as a component of the symmetrical model can be used to facilitate the understanding between the organisation and its diverse publics” (p.22).

The personal influence model is highly practiced in KSA and UAE (KSA  $m=4.52$  and UAE  $m=4.48$ ). Like other Arab countries and societies, patterns of collective communication dominate (Sriramesh and Vercic, 2001). In both countries, public relations professionals, local governments, and multinational corporations still prefer using interpersonal communication for public information campaigns and activities. Algalab (2011) agrees with that as his study found that public relations departments and staff in governmental institutions in KSA are practicing the *hail and farewell* model. The functions and responsibilities of public relations departments in this model are focused on hospitality, and greeting. The efficiency of the public relations department is determined and measured by the level of satisfaction of both the management, and the guest.

This shows that in Arab countries in which patterns of collective communication dominate, local governments and multinational corporations still favour using interpersonal communication for public information campaigns and activities. Zaharna (2001 cited in Al-Shohaib and Ali, 2009) stressed that Arabs prefer one-on-one communication for most aspects of life. For Arabs, the communication process is more than a conduit for information exchange, it represents a social ritual in which the display of feelings and expressions is important and cements the grounds for warm relationships and kinship on which business relationships are often based (Weir, 1993 cited in Al-Shohaib and Ali, 2009).

The data revealed in Al-Shohaib and Ali (2009) shows, for example, that only 46 percent of Saudi professionals used the Internet for public relations-related tasks. This percentage is very low, compared to Internet adoption in Western nations. In contrast, hospitality functions for dignitaries constitute public relations (Ayish and Kruckeberg, 1999) in KSA and UAE as well as other Arab countries.

In the exploratory study of public relations in India, Sriramesh and Grunig (1988) found that public relations practitioners used interpersonal communication to develop personal influence with key individuals, particularly in the media, the government and among activists. These practitioners used hospitality relations by giving gifts, hosting dinners and cocktails to relevant publics from whom they could later claim return favours. This phenomenon was further confirmed in a more extensive ethnographic analysis of 18 Indian organisations (Sriramesh, 1991).

In Chinese culture, successful public relations practitioners should know how to build good interpersonal relationships with their publics (Huang, 2000). According to Huang (2000), “Chinese culture is relation oriented or social oriented. In essence, the most notable characteristic in East Asia is the emphasis on social relations” (p.222). Wu and Taylor’s (2003) study also demonstrated that Taiwanese people still emphasise the interpersonal relationship building function for public relations practitioners. Therefore, Taiwanese people assume that socialising is an important job for public relations practitioners. When the personal influence model is heavily practiced, interpersonal communication skill, instead of writing, becomes the most important skill for public relations practitioners in some Asian cultures.

In their study of three Asian countries, Sriramesh, Kim and Takasaki (1999) found that the personal influence model is used widely in these countries. This research also focused on the degree of application of the personal influence theory in developing media-public relations practitioners’ relationship, building personal influence with key media individuals by doing favours for them so that they can solicit favours in return when organisations need help. Government regulators frequently bend the rules to help their favourite organisations.



Similarly, even without writing a press release, many public relations practitioners are able to place stories in the media by using the influence they have with a friendly journalist or editor. The professionals from India, Japan, and Korea all reported that they 'entertained' key publics by providing them with food or drinks and by giving them gifts (Sriramesh, et al., 1999).

Sriramesh (1991) said that the interpersonal influence model (Sriramesh, 1991) is an asymmetrical one, and it often includes unethical practice. The researchers Grunig J., et al. (1995) noted that this model can be successful in meeting organisational goals in societies with rigid cultures and authoritarian political systems and they believe this model relates to the personal influence model known as a 'favour bank'. A personal influence model is commonly used in lobbying and media relations where public relations practitioners use interpersonal relationships and connections to facilitate communication (Lawrence and Vasques, 2004).

In summary, the practice of the cultural interpreter model demonstrates the multi-cultural characteristic of UAE culture and the increasing impact of international trade on Saudi culture. The practice of the personal influence model suggests that KSA and UAE public relations practitioners are good networkers and they help their organisations and clients to socialise and communicate with key publics in order to build good relationships with them.

Beside the international models, the present study confirmed that public relations practitioners in KSA and UAE tend to practice the four models of public relations, press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. In both KSA and UAE publicity dominates (press agency model and public information model) over advanced models of public relations such as two-way asymmetrical and two-way

symmetrical. In these two countries the two-way models are not highly practiced because of public relations practitioners' lack of knowledge about ways to conduct research.

This finding is consistent with Al-Enad (1990) who stated that public relations in Saudi Arabia are applied in publicity, press agency and propagation of organisational accomplishments. Therefore, managers tend to be indifferent about adopting complex Internet applications for initiating symmetrical modes of communication with publics. This perception certainly conflicts with the applicability of the Internet as a mode of two way communication, enhancing greater openness between an organisation and its publics (Sriramesh, 1992).

Moreover, qualitative research reported by Kruckeberg (1994) suggests that UAE agencies primarily use one-way press agency and public information models of public relations, while internal departments of government organisations fall within - or more readily approach - a two-way symmetrical model, or at least a symmetrical model having 'mixed motives'.

Grunig and Grunig (1992) noted that the press agency model applies when a communication programme strives for favourable publicity, especially in the mass media, in almost any way possible. In general, the practitioners of this model see the mass media as a means for achieving their own ends and to control or dominate the environment, and do no research aside from monitoring the media in which they sought to place favourable articles about their clients, paying little attention to the truth or credibility of the news.

Similar to the present study findings, Lyra (1991) found that although all models of public relations are practiced in Greece, the press agency model dominates. Lyra attributed this to

the fact that the communication goals of public relations activities in Greece are publicity, and public relations practitioners in Greece lacked the skills to conduct research; therefore, they couldn't engage in two-way communication with their publics.

Two studies, Sriramesh (1991; 2004) in India and Karadjov, et al. (2000) in Bulgaria, also revealed that publicity dominates over advanced models of public relations such as two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. In these two countries the two-way models are not practiced because of public relations practitioners' lack of knowledge about ways to conduct research.

Huang's (2000) study in Taiwan discovered that all four models of public relations are practiced, but the use of a model changes after the country's political regime changes. The study revealed that during the authoritarian regime the press agency model was used to disseminate biased information that was favourable to the corporation. During the second time period, with a less authoritarian regime and the first traces of activism, the corporation tried to educate the public by using the public information model. Finally, when martial law was lifted, the corporation used the two-way asymmetrical model. Huang concluded that participative political regimes increase the ability of public relations practitioners to implement the two-way models.

Rhee (2002), who studied public relations and the effects of culture on public relations in South Korea, discovered a similar relationship between political regimes and public relations. In the 1970s, under an authoritarian government, South Korean organisations practiced the press agency model to avoid criticism and negative coverage about the organisations. When

the political regime democratised and the first activists and social interest groups emerged, Korean organisations started practicing advanced forms of public relations.

The two-way symmetrical model shows a higher overall score (KSA  $m=2.16$  and UAE  $m=2.92$ ) than the asymmetrical model (KSA  $m=2.00$  and UAE  $m=2.74$ ). The use of research as a tool to gauge the needs of the public for effective decision-making processes is something that both KSA and UAE based public relations practitioners are evidently struggling to embrace. The failure by those public relations practitioners to incorporate research to measure and understand the needs of the public is evidenced by the low mean score of item 2, “before starting a programme, we do surveys or informal research to find out how much management and our publics understand each other” (KSA  $m=1.13$  and UAE  $m=2.22$ ).

In contrast item one, “the purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and publics the organisation affects” (KSA  $m=3.10$  and UAE  $m=4.17$ ) had the highest mean among all the items. This result might suggest that public relations practitioners in both KSA and UAE know what constitutes an excellent model of public relations but do not know or agree on the importance of research in establishing a healthy relationship between an organisation and its public. This of course has very serious implications for the way public relations are practiced and, equally importantly, for the way it is perceived. In an increasingly results-oriented business environment, companies are demanding facts and figures to prove the extent to which public relations activity is providing a return on investment.

Interestingly, item 1 in the two-way symmetrical model, “the purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and publics the organisation affects”, had the highest mean (KSA  $m=3.10$  and UAE  $m=4.17$ ). With this item scoring a higher mean than the other three, one could easily argue that KSA and UAE public relations practitioners know what constitutes an excellent model of public relations but do not know or agree on whether or not the use of research to gauge how well the organisation and its public understand one another is important.

The undemocratic system, lack of freedom, and low individual rights, are not the only obstacles facing public relations in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The lack of qualified graduates and inadequate budget allocations to public relations departments are also major obstacles facing public relations professionals (Hussein and Sammer, 1991). Moreover; Saudi public relations researchers have found that authoritarianism, centralisation, and strict complex hierarchical structure in Saudi organisations influence many aspects of public relations (e.g., Al-Tarah, 1995). Additionally, the majority of decision makers in Saudi organisations are not aware of the meaning of public relations, its roles or purposes.

### **9.3. Public relations practitioners’ roles in KSA and UAE**

The demographic information generated by the present survey, confirms that 67% of respondents based in UAE were female, only small numbers of female respondents reported holding a managerial role. This outcome might suggest that many young women are employed in technical or functionary positions rather than those with a recognised path to management. Also this might suggest that fewer women are promoted into the more powerful managerial role. Al-Jenaibi’s (2010) research came out with some findings that relate to

women in the public relations field. She confirmed that there is a clear discrimination against women whose abilities are often doubted and who are always treated unequally to men. For example, women in the PR departments in the UAE are not accepted 100% in many places like travel agents, hospitals, hotels etc. Al-Jenaib (2011) found that public relations managers in UAE do not believe women can function as leaders and managers because of skills differences at work, but they believe that women are hard workers in the public relations field. Thus, female practitioners feel discrimination when they do not get administration jobs.

The report found that key decision-makers give the more competitive leadership roles within the agency to men because men possess a more competitive style of interaction, jockeying for a position on a hierarchy of competitive accomplishment. Thus, women are thought to be more suited to the transformational aspects of public relations (communication) while men are left to handle clients and management issues that take a hard-nosed approach thought to be characteristic of the corporate world. The Excellence Study of Grunig, J., et al. (2002) also showed that women perceive less support in organisations than men, and CEOs seem to have lower expectations about the managerial competence of women when there are more women in management roles in public relations.

In a study aimed at comparing the roles of male and female practitioners, Broom (1982) found that all practitioners surveyed assumed the roles of expert prescriber, communication technician, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator at different times. Both men and women indicated that they most often played the role of expert prescriber, but the other roles varied in frequency between genders. Women reported that they most often played the roles of communication technician, problem-solving process

facilitator, and communication facilitator in that order while men were problem-solving process facilitators second, then communication facilitators and communication technicians.

More significantly, Grunig, Toth and Hon (2001) observed that women often hold more technical rather than managerial roles, perhaps because of the biased social expectations of women, while their male counterparts tend to mainly perform managerial activities. Wilcox and Cameron (2006) state, “women are segregated into the lower-level technician roles, spending time on routine activities such as writing, editing, and handling media relations. Conversely, more men are promoted into the more powerful managerial role, engaging in such activities as counselling senior management, and making key policy decisions” (p.35).

The findings of the present study show that practitioners in both KSA and UAE see a very high score for “helping international clients understand the local business environment” and “introducing international clients to important local people” (see Table 6). From this standpoint, public relations practitioners could be defined as ‘cultural intermediaries’ (Hodges, 2006) or ‘cultural agents’ (Schoenberger-Orgad, 2009, p.7). These findings might show that public relations companies are using local Arab public relations staff as token account handlers and translators, but it also shows that the practice of the cultural interpreter model demonstrates the increasing impact of international trade on the Saudi culture. The cultural interpreter model reported very high in UAE ( $m=4.96$ ) which demonstrates the multi-cultural characteristics of UAE culture and society.

The finding of the present study shows that practitioners in both KSA and UAE are functioning mainly as technicians, not managers, and there is limited management involvement in public relations itself. Analysis of the data suggests that practitioners are not

fully utilising their advantageous position in the organisational hierarchy to provide the kind of service which would assist management. This could be due to one or all of the following factors.

- Most practitioners do not have specific training in public relations and therefore lack the basic body of knowledge in the field of PR aspects such as strategies and techniques of PR, media relations, internal communication, events, product-PR, crisis communication, public affairs, corporate identity and legal and ethical questions, analysis of problems, setting objectives, conception, realisation, and evaluation.
- Practitioners are not fully utilising their 'soft skills' like leadership, the ability to work in a team, analytical skills to monitor issues, presentation skills, rhetorical skills, fluency in text and language, self-management, professional experience, fancifulness, creativity, loyalty, interpersonal communication, or presentations.
- They may have only shallow expertise in subject matter including scientific knowledge about communication, society, economics, psychology, technical aspects, law, politics, history, lobbying, the media system and general education.

These factors make practitioners unable to demonstrate the value of public relations to achieving organisational effectiveness; therefore they were carrying out technical functions, incorporating the duties of media relations specialist and communications liaison, writing press releases and public relations material and making media contacts - activities associated with the press agency/publicity and public information models.

As the present research found that public relations practitioners in both KSA and UAE are still practicing one-way models more than the two-way models, there are clear empirical



linkages between practitioner's roles and Grunig's four models of PR (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). Dozier (1992) suggests that:

*“Practitioners in organisations practicing the press agency and public information models of PR will engage in few activities that define the PR manager role. Practitioners in organisations practicing the two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models of PR are more likely to play the PR manager role.” (Dozier, 1992, p.345)*

Empirical studies examining public relations models and practitioner roles showed that the manager role correlates most closely with the two-way symmetric and asymmetric models of public relations (Dozier, 1983). The Excellence Study states, in order to be excellent, public relations professionals must enact the manager role and apply two-way communication models. The studies conclude that the empirically derived manager role enactment “involves facilitating communication between publics and the dominant coalition, as well as facilitating problem solving” (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002, p.237) - activities closely related to the two-way symmetrical communications model. Moreover, organisations that practice the press agency and public information models need technicians, and communication staff, not involved in strategic planning and problem solving under these models. Once strategic decisions are made and action plans drawn, the technician is brought in to implement outward communication from the organisation to target publics. The process is one way; the practitioner is a skilled communicator uninvolved in monitoring the environment. He or she simply provides a technical support service (outward communication) for decisions made and actions taken by others.

The present study found that the media relations specialist role is played more frequently in organisations practicing the public information model. The media relations role is less frequently played in organisations practicing the two-way symmetrical model of public relations. The communication liaison role (a high level communication facilitator who does not make policy decisions) is less likely to be played in organisations practicing the public information model. The liaison role is more frequent in organisations practicing the two way symmetric model of public relations.

Several studies in Asia portray the role of media relations in organisations' public relations practices. The study by Sriramesh, et al. (2000) found media relations to be the primary public relations activity in their Japanese and Indian samples, where the function was mainly linked to publicity. Similarly, another study by Grunig, J., et al. (1995) found media relations to be the predominant activity of most public relations professionals in India. According to Grunig, J., et al. (1995), this was because most defined public relations as publicity and described its purpose as building a positive image of the organisation. Likewise in South Korea, Yungwook Kim (2004) states that the primary focus of public relations was to gain publicity through media relations.

In conclusion, the results of the presented data show that public relations practitioners in both KSA and UAE are playing little role in their organisations, particularly at management level. Grunig, Grunig and Ehling (1992) proposed from their research that, "public relations is most likely to contribute to effectiveness when the senior public relations manager is a member of the dominant coalition where he or she is able to shape the organisation's goals" (p.86). Lauzen and Dozier (1992) posit that the public relations manager role enactment is the "missing link" between the organisational environment challenges and consequences for the

public relations function. Moreover, excellence theory explains the value of public relations in an organisation and describes how the communication function is organised and practiced most effectively in a corporate setting (Grunig and Grunig, 2002). Excellence theory suggests that public relations must serve in corporate roles that are both managerial and technical in nature.

#### **9.4. Journalists' views on PR practice in KSA and UAE**

Given the importance of the role played by the mass media in society and growth of the public relations field, it is important to gain a better understanding of how the mass media operate today and how information is gathered, selected and disseminated to the public. This study takes an in-depth look at the media and its relationship with one of the fast-growing institutions in its external environment - the public relations profession.

In this part of the research, the aim is to examine the journalists' opinions on the performance of public relations practitioners in both KSA and UAE. Participants were asked to comment freely on the following statements.

- 1) Public relations practitioners are helpful to journalists for informative, complete, timely news.
- 2) Public relations practitioners are honest with journalists.
- 3) Public relations practitioners understand the problems journalists encounter such as meeting deadlines, space limitations.
- 4) Journalists can trust public relations practitioners.
- 5) Public relations departments supply media with newsworthy materials.
- 6) Media materials sent by PR departments are well written and edited.

- 7) Materials sent by PR departments are usually relevant to my media outlet.
- 8) Materials sent by PR departments are usually relevant to the beat I cover.
- 9) Person-to-person communication is still the best way to build a mutual relationship between journalists and PR practitioners.

The journalists' comments on the first statement, "public relations practitioners are helpful to journalists for informative, complete, and timely news" indicate that public relations practitioners in both KSA and UAE still have a long way to go to understand how and why the media work the way they do. Respondent No. 5 (KSA) stated, "PR departments in the KSA do not understand the need for accurate, informative, well-written press releases". Respondent No. 3 (UAE) stated that, "PR practitioners in UAE ought to be diplomatic, which normally will not serve the purpose of journalists who look for news". Respondent No. 8 based in KSA said:

*"From my experience with our publication, we've faced a lot of problems working with in-house PR departments. Most times it is just easier contacting the key person directly through his secretary and once he is aware of what we're looking for, it gets done faster. If we were to approach the PR department directly nine times out of ten, we'd be postponing stories as deadlines wouldn't be met".*

Respondent No. 6 based in UAE stated, "depends what you want. If you're publishing something in the PR's interest, they ought to be helpful, but it is often required for them to hinder, delay or mitigate what may be considered 'bad' news".

The findings identify frustration among journalists towards PR practitioners who do not seem to understand how the media works. This can lead to a negative relationship between journalists and PR practitioners, and can also contribute to a negative perception of the PR industry in general. Furthermore, the analysis of the journalists' comments reveals that while journalists are seeking stories that are clear, specific, and interesting, practitioners are violating the basic rules of news writing and focusing on how to get free advertisements to serve their own interests. Additionally, journalists added that PR practitioners concealed important facts and they do not help journalists to reach the right and most direct sources.

In a similar study, when Buhagiar (2006) investigated the perceptions of public relations professionals among radio, television and print reporters in the state of Michigan, he asked journalists for suggestions to give new public relations professionals about the field as they perceived it. The most common answers among reporters were to "understand journalism", "know the needs of a journalist", "know the deadlines of journalists", "pitch an angle, not a story" and "be less like a salesperson".

Horton (2004) explains that any newsroom, whether print or electronic, is an information factory producing and packaging editorial content for consumers. Workers in the factory - editors and reporters - process and publish content with an eye to consumer interest and/or accuracy and fairness to gain and keep readers, listeners or viewers. Horton (2004) states that journalists are gatekeepers and filters of information at both fact gathering and editing levels, and they are bound by assignments, editorial concerns and deadlines. In these contexts individuals and organisations that want to be heard through traditional news media must understand the newsroom's information flood and reporters' limitations.

According to Bollinger (2000), reliability is a factor in how receptive a journalist is to the unsolicited information provided by a public relations representative. If the journalist finds the public relations professional to be reliable, accurate and trustworthy, he or she will be more likely to read news releases from this person.

Respondent No. 13 based in KSA tried to explain the reasons behind the lack of accuracy, stating:

*“The PR is in a difficult position as very often it is near impossible to gain full, accurate and relevant information on time. So when the information is finally there, it is such a rush to get it out that accuracy goes out of the window”.*

Battenberg (2002) proposed to public relations practitioners a number of different relationship-building tactics to improve the relationships with journalists. Openness, preparation, and the accurate use of facts are among the keys Battenberg (2002) proposed to build healthy relationships with the media. Horton (2004) concludes that in many ways, reporters and PR practitioners are enemies chained together. They may not like each other, but they cooperate to get a job done. The PR practitioner is out to position the client well, and the reporter needs an accurate news story. When they accommodate each other, both realise a positive result.

When journalists were faced with the statements, “public relations practitioners are honest with journalists” and “journalists can trust public relations practitioners”, the responses show that “journalists distrust PR people because they feel that public relations professionals are generally trying to cover up or put spins on things.” Respondent No. 11 based in UAE said, *“a good PR’s job is to flex the truth into deceptive shapes. Honesty shouldn’t be part of that*

*process. A good PR will never lie, simply colour the truth".* Truesdell (1989) addresses source credibility in this way:

*"Faced with the dilemma, the public relations practitioner must always be candid. If you deceive the media, you'll get away with the deception only once and at the cost of alienating that reporter - and maybe the entire publication or broadcast outlet - from that particular client and possibly from all of your firm's clients in the future."*

Aronoff (1975) reported a credibility problem among Texas journalists and suggested that in order for public relations practitioners to increase their credibility with the media, they must try to improve the attitudes the media hold about the public relations profession. Kopenhaver, Martinson and Ryan (1984) reported similar findings among Florida journalists. Carroll (1992) replicated Aronoff and Kopenhaver's studies and reported results which supported their findings. Carroll came to this conclusion, "empirical evidence from several studies over a period of almost 20 years supports the argument that public relations practitioners continue to have a credibility problem with journalists".

The combined results of those more narrowly focused studies, together with the findings of this study, would support an empirical generalisation that journalists have negative attitudes toward public relations practitioners. In fact, the problem seems to be as serious today as it was when Aronoff reported his findings in 1975 and there is no doubt that this continuity of hostility between the two groups is hurting the public's interests as noted by Kopenhaver, Martinson and Ryan (1984):

*“A journalist who will not use information from a public relations person because he or she does not trust any practitioner may miss out on some good stories or include incomplete, unclear, or inaccurate information in articles. A practitioner who finds he or she is not trusted simply because of the position he or she holds will find it harder to do a job and may feel forced to use unethical means to get a message to the public. Neither situation benefits the news media, public relations, or society”.*

In response to the statement “public relations departments supply media with newsworthy materials”, journalists in both KSA and UAE were negative. Wilcox, et al. (2000) listed materials that public relations practitioners could produce for internal and external audiences, including news releases, video news releases, fact sheets, media advisories, newsletters, company magazines, brochures and handbooks. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000) also cited reprints of speeches, position papers and backgrounders as important public relations materials. Public relations practitioners would usually send these materials to important parties and arbiters of opinion within all forms of the news media to respond to selective reporting.

This long list of media materials suggests that, in principle, PR material can be both newsworthy and informative. So, for example, universities, public agencies or research institutes will often use their PR departments to publicise new research findings, and these may well be of general interest rather than simply self-serving. But there are also clearly occasions when well-crafted press releases of no news value seep into mainstream news. These views coincide with the opinion of some journalists that the “news values” of practitioners are opposed to their own. According to one respondent (No. 4) based in UAE,



*“public relations practitioners think about the needs of their organisation first and less about what journalists need”*. Another respondent (No. 1) based in UAE accused public relations practitioners of *“hiding valuable information, not being objective, and not focused on the public interest but on their own company or client’s interests”*.

Journalists were asked to comment on the following statement related to the quality of the media materials produced and released by PR departments, “media materials sent by PR departments are well written and edited”. In most of their comments journalists appear to want information from public relations departments that is fast, reliable, and direct. A respondent (No. 3) based in KSA confirmed, *“do not waste your time on polished releases; I would rather receive news sooner (as simple text in an email) than have you polish the release”*. Another journalist (No. 2) based in UAE took it a step further and said, *“I always think they’d be better off sending a list of names, facts, figures and salient quotes”*. In similar research, Morton (1995) supports this when he mentions a research finding in which journalists, in 54% of cases, consider the media releases to be badly and non-professionally written and 75% of journalists believe that public relations professionals promote products that do not deserve to be promoted, while 62% of journalists believe that public relations draws attention to irrelevant and trivial events. Marken (1994) exemplifies this point by reporting that, “nearly every editor and reporter complains that the writing quality of the PR materials has deteriorated to a dangerous level with many releases lacking clarity, brevity and directness.”

In response to the statements “materials sent by PR departments are usually relevant to my media outlet” and “materials sent by PR departments are usually relevant to the beat I cover”, Respondent No. 4 (based in UAE) stated:

*“I have very little respect for most PR people I’ve worked with, simply because 90% of the press releases I receive are irrelevant to my magazine, and even if I send them our editorial map, editorial policy – I still get sent these.”*

Journalist No. 10 (based in KSA) confirmed:

*“I regularly receive at least 20 emails per day – 95% of which are irrelevant to the subjects our title covers. They are plainly sent under a ‘blanket marketing policy’ and the PR practitioners who send them are clearly not researching the target audience of the titles we publish to see what our editorial policy is”.*

Another journalist (No. 6, based in UAE) commented, *” most of public relations practitioners have no clue, they do not know the difference between newspaper and newswire”*. A significant proportion of subjects commented that public relations practitioners should not approach journalists unless the story is relevant to the publication and will be of interest to readers. In other words, practitioners should thoroughly research the media as well as their client. These reactions from respondents show that journalists appreciate knowledgeable practitioners who steer them in the right direction and save the journalist time in reporting a story.

In contrast, the findings show the frustration among journalists towards public relations practitioners who do not seem to understand how the media works, and who do little or no research before sending media materials out. This can lead to both a negative relationship between a journalist and particular public relations practitioners, and can also contribute to a

negative perception of the public relations industry in general. Basic research is a key factor in building better relationships.

The last statement introduced to journalists to comment on was about direct communication; “person-to-person communication is still the best way to build a mutual relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners”. The responses to this statement show clearly that journalists appreciate interpersonal communication as the best way to build a mutual understanding between themselves and public relations practitioners. No doubt the findings here are related strongly to the surrounding culture which is believed to have a tendency toward interpersonal communication and social interaction rather than other ways of communication. Moreover, the personal influence model is most likely to be employed in those nations in which public opinion is not well articulated in the media and where governmental officials are the most important audience for public relations messages (Taylor and Kent, 1999).

Aronoff (1975) discussed the substantial role of interpersonal relations in communication between practitioners and journalists. He noted that public relations practitioners in the United States preferred to disseminate their information primarily through official press releases rather than through personal or informal means. In contrast, a study of public relations in three Asian countries, India, South Korea and Japan (Sriramesh, Kim and Takasaki, 1999), noted the informal and personal influence in public relations practitioners’ work. For example, with regard to the use of public relations news materials by journalists, Sriramesh, Kim and Takasaki, (1999) reported that public relations practitioners in those three countries were best able to place stories in the media by making phone calls to friendly journalists and editors rather than by writing press releases. Another study, by Sriramesh and

Grunig (1996) found that public relations practitioners in India used interpersonal communication to develop personal influence with key individuals, particularly in the media, the government and among activists. These practitioners used hospitality relations by giving gifts or hosting dinners and cocktail parties for relevant publics from whom they could later claim return favours.

The importance of the media to organisations, and to their public relations departments cannot be ignored. Argenti (2007) says that one of the most critical areas within any corporate communication function is the media relations department. Grabowski (1992) went further when he considered media relations as the core of the public relations profession, adding that a “successful public relations campaign cannot be waged without successful media relations, as media coverage can have significant positive or negative impact on every aspect of an organisation’s operations”. Argenti (2007) says that “the media is both a constituency and a disseminator of information and its role has gained increasing importance over the years.” Baskin, Aronoff and Lattimore (1997, p.197) agree with that, and state that “the mass media put people in touch with the world beyond their immediate experience and shape people’s perceptions and beliefs particularly in relation to events and topics with which people have little direct contact”.

## **9.8. Conclusion**

The qualitative investigation findings confirm the quantitative investigation findings in terms of the following. 1) Media relations is at the heart of public relations activities in both countries. 2) Public relations practitioners use a number of different relationship-building tactics to improve the relationships with journalists. 3) Public relations practitioners do not do

any sort of research, even in order to ‘know the type of media outlet’, ‘know the needs of a journalist’ or ‘know which journalist to contact in which media outlet’. 4) The personal Influence model is still the best way to build a mutual relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners in both countries.

Moreover, in countries with high context and large power distance culture and authoritarian or less pluralistic political systems, like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, it is safe to say that public relations has little chance to be practiced in an excellent way. On one hand practitioners would be deprived of exercising two-way communications, and on the other hand they would be practising the technician role more than the manager role. Therefore, it is unlikely for practitioners to be involved in research in order to define the problem, develop the programme, and take major responsibility for its implementation. This is surely undermines the roles and effectiveness of both public relations departments and practitioners. The theoretical conceptualisation of the Excellence Study predicted, public relations and communications departments cannot make organisations more effective unless public relations functions as an integral part of management, and senior public relations practitioners are positioned as part of the dominant coalition.

## **CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

### **10.1. Introduction**

The field work conducted in the present study found that public relations practice in both KSA and UAE shares characteristics with the practice in both developed and developing countries even as there seems to be movement towards two-way asymmetrical communication. Nevertheless, the present research's findings suggest that the models put forward by Grunig, J., et al. (1992) do not accurately reflect public relations practice in KSA and UAE. Instead the dominant models are the personal influence and cultural interpreter models, more than any of Grunig's (1992) models. By choosing the personal influence model as their favourite model, practitioners in KSA and UAE point to the importance they attach to good interpersonal relations in the course of their work. And by identifying the cultural interpreter model as their favourite model, practitioners in KSA and UAE point to the internationalisation of public relations practised in both countries.

Moreover, the results of the quantitative and qualitative research conducted in the present study show how the country's socioeconomic and political conditions impact the practice of public relations. The study has shown that public relations practice in both KSA and UAE has grown strongly during the past two decades due to factors such as increasing public education, the growing impact and pervasiveness of mass/electronic media, and the growth of the economies. Nevertheless, it is safe to conclude that due to the absence of a political system that guarantees free media and freedom of expression in the manner that practitioners in democratic societies enjoy, public relations practitioners in Saudi Arabia and the United

Arab Emirates may keep facing many factors that hinder their work, whether in the internal work environment or the external political, economic, and cultural environment.

The survey's outcomes also show that public relations practitioners in the United Arab Emirates have benefited from the open and liberal economic system in the country. Public relations departments and public relations agencies in the United Arab Emirates have also managed to attract and employ staff and experts from all over the world, thanks to the immigration law applicable in the country and also thanks to the cultural and social climate which is characterised by diversity and tolerance. This is certainly reflected positively in the work environment and the advancement of public relations practice, and allows both to exist at an advanced level compared to the level of the profession in Saudi Arabia which is still unable to attract enough international expertise because of the political system, cultural and social traditions, and the restricted immigration measures applied in the country.

Additionally, the field work results show that public relations activities in both KSA and UAE are highly grounded in media relations and publicity. These types of activities by their nature cannot provide organisations with the feedback required to enable them to engage in strategic decision-making. This is therefore a major weakness in public relations practice in countries like KSA and UAE where practitioners are still practising one-way models and do not provide organisations with feedback. The present study indicates a weak commitment to research among public relations practitioners in both KSA and UAE. This of course has very serious implications for the way public relations are practiced and, equally importantly, for the way it is perceived. An important finding of the Excellence Project was that public relations activities could not contribute to organisational objectives unless they were grounded in research.

White and Dozier (1992) explain how public relations practitioners interact with the organisational environment to gather, select, and relay information from the environment to decision makers in the dominant coalition (p.93). This role achieves its highest level in symmetric communication when the full range of negotiating and diplomatic skills is deployed to secure positive outcomes for all parties. In the two-way symmetric model practitioners serve as mediators between organisations and their publics. Their goal is mutual understanding between practitioners and their publics (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p.22).

Public relations have been historically identified with democracy (Kruckeberg, 1995; 1996). Golitsinski (2000) noted that “democracy is an essential requirement for the existence of public relations” (p.13). Public relations plays a critical role in the free flow of information in democratic societies (Guth, 2000). Toledano (1995) argued that one should “exercise life in a democratic, pluralistic, competitive and open society, in order to appreciate public relations as a characteristic of a democratic system, very different from propaganda, which does not allow competition of ideas, and is not committed to the truth” (p.18). Two-way communication with the public is not important for governmental and business organisations if public opinion has little power in a country.

Most of the body of knowledge also assumes a pluralistic democratic system as the environment where public relations is most advanced and practiced in a strategic manner. Democracy increases the opportunity for public opinion to influence social system decisions and actions, and therefore public relations as a profession can be directly related to the public opinion empowerment advancements. The development of open-record laws, consumer protection laws, the restriction on lobbying and on political contributions and the



development of unions have all increased the need for organisations to communicate within the social system of which they form a part (Sriramesh, 2009).

Culture is also a key variable in the practice of public relations, and the results of this study support the qualitative analysis of the link between culture and the models of public relations reported by Grunig, J., et al. (1995). Moreover, the strong correlations between the models of public relations and Hofstede's cultural dimensions show that there are links between the public relations practice and societal culture in KSA and UAE.

In a high context culture like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates where people are deeply involved with each other, American and Western models of public relations fall back in favour of the prevailing international models. The outcome of the present relations shows that public relations practitioners in both Arab, Muslim countries still emphasise the interpersonal relationship building function for public relations practitioners. Therefore, practitioners assumed that socialising is an important job for public relations practitioners. In summary:

- The dominant theory of the press greatly influences the practice of public relations in both countries.
- The public relations function is applied towards one or both of two goals:
  - a) To educate the public on subjects related to the client's field of work, increase public knowledge about pertinent issues, and persuade the public to behave or act in a way that achieves the goals of the organisation
  - b) To publicise the achievements of the client and/or society as a whole, and to make the public feel content and gratified.

- The undemocratic systems, lack of freedom, and low individual rights, are not the only obstacles facing public relations in both countries. The lack of qualified graduates and inadequate budget allocations to public relations departments are also major obstacles facing Saudi public relations professionals. Moreover; authoritarianism, centralisation, and strict, complex hierarchical structures in KSA and UAE organisations influence many aspects of public relations. Additionally, the majority of decision makers in KSA and UAE organisations are not aware of the meaning of public relations, or its roles and purposes.

## **10.2. Re-visiting the research questions**

After extensive studies of public relations in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom Grunig and Grunig (1995) and Dozier (2002) made two primary conclusions. First, the findings of their research can be applied to other countries. Second, most of the conditions that foster public relations in Anglophone countries may not exist in other cultures.

The findings emerging from the present study around the research questions identified, and the results of the field work conducted, show how the countries' socioeconomic and political conditions impact on the practice of public relations. In summary, the findings around each of the present study's three questions are as follows.

### **RQ1: Which models of public relations are practiced in KSA and UAE?**

Instead of James Grunig's (1984; 1992) four original public relations models, the two international public relations models, the *cultural interpreter* model and the *personal influence* model, are the most frequently practiced models in both KSA and UAE. The present study found that the *cultural interpreter* model is the most frequently practiced public relations model reported in UAE, and the second most frequently practiced model is the *personal influence* model. In contrast, practitioners in KSA practice the *personal influence* model the most followed by the *cultural interpreter* model. The two-way symmetrical model shows a higher overall score than did the asymmetrical model. The use of research as a tool to gauge the needs of the public for an effective decision-making process is something that both KSA and UAE based public relations practitioners are evidently struggling to embrace.

### **RQ2: Which roles are practiced by public relations practitioners in KSA and UAE?**

The findings of the present study show that practitioners in both KSA and UAE are functioning mainly as *cultural mediators* and *technicians*, rather than *managers*, as they show a limited management involvement in public relations itself.

The *technician* roles scored the highest means (on a Likert five point scale) among the roles in both KSA (m=3.9) and UAE (m=4.1). The *strategist* items scored the lowest means, with only an overall mean of m=1.3 in KSA and m=2.4 in UAE. This is therefore a major weakness in public relations practice in countries like KSA and UAE where practitioners are still practicing one-way models.

**RQ3: What are the socio-cultural, political, and economic factors that determine public relations models and roles practiced in KSA and UAE?**

Kruckeberg (1996) suggested that many of the values of Middle Eastern culture are distinctly non-Western and Middle Eastern culture in some ways does not lend itself to Western public relations practice. In Hall's view, a high context culture - like the Arab culture - is one in which people are deeply involved with each other. Generally high context cultures are characterised by establishing social trust first; personal relations and goodwill are valued; agreements emphasise trust; and negotiations are slow and ritualistic. In high-context cultures personal relations are highly valued, to first establish social trust and goodwill is very important (Hall, 1976).

Hofstede (1983) examined a group of Arab states (Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and UAE) with regard to the four cultural dimensions. The study categorised the Arab countries as high power distance countries with a *power distance index* (PDI) of 80, which means that people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. The same study showed that the Arab world scores 52 on the *masculinity/femininity* dimension and is thus a masculine society. Generally, KSA is a society with very high power distance, a collectivist culture, less tolerance for uncertainty, and very high masculine characteristics. UAE is a society with high power distance, a collectivist culture, less tolerance for uncertainty, and moderate masculine characteristics.

The reported findings of this study show clearly that public relations practitioners based in KSA and UAE are aware of Grunig's four models, but they tend to practice the other international models more (*personal influence* and *cultural interpreter* models) as these two

models are suited to or fit the type of culture and business environment dominant in both countries. Nevertheless, the present study shows that practitioners in KSA and UAE seek good interpersonal relationships with people inside and outside of their organisation. They recognise the importance of understanding a second language and helping clients to understand the local business environment. Respondents also recognise the value of favourable publicity for their client organisation, value accuracy in communication with publics, implement research to evaluate public relations effectiveness, and understand that public relations can mediate relationships between the organisation and its publics.

### **10.3. Implications of the study**

This study provides several implications for the theory of public relations and other disciplines:

- 1) As public relations theory is derived from a Western point of view and assumes a well-functioning democratic context, scholars agree that it is very important to study the theory and practice of public relations in different cultures. The study of public relations in countries such as KSA and UAE with a non-Western culture can provide a valuable foundation for public relations theory-building within a Middle Eastern or Arab context.
- 2) The goal of this study is to contribute to the country-by-country documentation of the status of public relations, especially in underrepresented regions of the world such as the Arab Middle Eastern countries.
- 3) Any social, economic, or political institution, uniformly adopted in different parts of the world, will have different trends and features, unique to each nation and culture - including the institution of public relations. Subsequently, this study is only the beginning for public relations practitioners and organisations to understand the diversity of public relations in non-

Western cultures. Although this research focused specifically on KSA and UAE public relations professionals, the implications of further research in this area could potentially have a ripple effect on public relations worldwide.

4) The present research creates an opportunity for Arab practitioners to consider developing unique public relations models that work for them and their publics.

5) This research could be easily conducted in any Arab country or countries and Western or Asian countries. Such studies can raise awareness amongst public relations practitioners and organisations worldwide about why differences occur in the public relations profession.

6) It is possible that if new models and theories are developed as a result of such research, there is potential for them to be included in global public relations literature as part of public relations education worldwide. Public relations practitioners worldwide could use this information to better understand and appreciate the diversity of the profession and understand that public relations cannot exist away from the surrounding environment.

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## APPENDICES

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Email to participants (English – Arabic)**





## رسالة الاستبيان

nawaf tamimi <nawaf tamimi@gmail.com>  
To: Nawaf Abdel-Hay <nawaf tamimi@gmail.com>

24 January 2012 10:11

Welcome to My Survey  
Dear Colleagues and Friends.

I am conducting a study about "The political and socio-economic environment and the professionalisation of Public Relations in the Arab Middle East: a comparative study of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates".

Broom et al. (2000) summarized the definition of an organisation-public relationship as the following:

"Organisation -public relationships are represented by the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between an organisation and its publics". (p. 18)

This explains the importance of the present study. From reviewing the literature in both Arabic and English, and from discussions with numerous Public Relations practitioners throughout the Arab Middle East, it is clear that this investigation is amongst the first to attempt a detailed examination of the standard of PR professionalism in the region. The findings will provide the evidence for a comprehensive analysis with particular reference to two Arab countries with contrasting political systems: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Moreover, It will contribute to the global study of Public Relations by providing an Arab perspective that will analyse how the profession is developing in a region that is currently undergoing great change.

It will take about 5 - 10 minutes of your time to answer to these questions. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Your organization's name or your name will never be used or placed in any data file. The research is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tony Olden, Senior Lecturer, University of London.

Your feedback and opinions are valuable, Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Your sincerely;  
Nawaf Altamimi

سلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

الزملاء والأصدقاء الأعزاء

انني بصدد إجراء دراسة عن "العلاقة بين البيئة السياسية والاجتماعية والاقتصادية والممارسة المهنية للعلاقات العامة في الدول العربية الشرق اوسطية: دراسة مقارنة بين المملكة العربية السعودية ودولة الامارات العربية المتحدة".

: يقول بروم وآخرون (2000) في تعريف علاقة المؤسسة بالجمهور

تتجسد علاقة المؤسسة مع الجمهور ، من خلال عدة أشكال من التعامل، والتفاعل والتبادل والروابط، التي تقوم (بين المؤسسة و جماهيرها". (ص 18

من هنا بالضبط تتبع أهمية هذه الدراسة. ومن خلال مراجعة الأدبيات الأكاديمية باللغتين العربية والانكليزية ، وإجراء العديد من المناقشات مع الكثير من ممارسي العلاقات العامة في جميع أنحاء الدول العربية في الشرق

نفتن - يناير 2012

## APPENDIX 2

Survey messages as appeared on [www.zoomerange.com](http://www.zoomerange.com)

## Public Relations Models

50%

Welcome to My Survey  
Dear Colleagues and Friends.

I am conducting a study about "The political and socio-economic environment and the professionalisation of Public Relations in the Arab Middle East: a comparative study of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates".

Broom et al. (2000) summarized the definition of an organisation-public relationship as the following:

"Organisation -public relationships are represented by the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between an organisation and its publics". (p. 18)

This explains the importance of the present study. From reviewing the literature in both Arabic and English, and from discussions with numerous Public Relations practitioners throughout the Arab Middle East, it is clear that this investigation is amongst the first to attempt a detailed examination of the standard of PR professionalism in the region. The findings will provide the evidence for a comprehensive analysis with particular reference to two Arab countries with contrasting political systems: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Moreover; It will contribute to the global study of Public Relations by providing an Arab perspective that will analyse how the profession is developing in a region that is currently undergoing great change.

It will take about 5 - 10 minutes of your time to answer to these questions. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Your organization's name or your name will never be used or placed in any data file. The research is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tony Olden, Senior Lecturer, University of London.

Your feedback and opinions are valuable. Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Your sincerely:  
Nawaf Altamimi



## استبيان حول نماذج العلاقات العامة

50%

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

الزملاء والأصدقاء الأعزاء

إنني بصدد إجراء دراسة عن "العلاقة بين البيئة السياسية والاجتماعية والاقتصادية والممارسة المهنية للعلاقات العامة في الدول العربية الشرق اوسطية: دراسة مقارنة بين المملكة العربية السعودية ودولة الامارات العربية المتحدة".

: يقول بروم وآخرون (2000) في تعريف علاقة المؤسسة بالجمهور

تتجسد علاقة المؤسسة مع الجمهور ، من خلال عدة أشكال من التعامل، والتفاعل والتبادل والروابط، " (التي تقوم بين المؤسسة و جماهيرها". (ص 18

من هنا بالضبط تتبع أهمية هذه الدراسة. ومن خلال مراجعة الأدبيات الأكاديمية باللغتين العربية والانكليزية ، وإجراء العديد من المناقشات مع الكثير من ممارسي العلاقات العامة في جميع أنحاء الدول العربية في الشرق الأوسط ، تبين أن هذه الدراسة هي من المحاولات الأولى التي تسعى الى تقديم دراسة تفصيلية لمعيار الكفاءة المهنية في ممارسة العلاقات العامة في المنطقة. وسوف توفر نتائج هذه الدراسة الشاملة معطيات حقيقية وعلمية بخصوص تأثير المناخ السياسي والاجتماعي والاقتصادي على مهنية (حرفية) ممارسة العلاقات العامة في بلدين عربيين هامين، يمتازان بأن لكل منهما نظامه السياسي والاجتماعي والاقتصادي المختلف عن الآخر وهما: المملكة العربية السعودية ودولة الامارات العربية المتحدة.

وعلاوة على ذلك، سوف تسهم الدراسة في تعزيز الدراسات العالمية حول العلاقات العامة بتقديم وجهة نظر عربية عبر تحليل لكيفية تطور مهنة العلاقات العامة في المنطقة العربية التي تشهد حالياً تغيرات كبيرة في مناخها السياسي والاجتماعي والاقتصادي. سوف تستغرق الإجابة عن أسئلة الاستبيان حوالي 5 - 10 دقائق. وستعامل جميع المعلومات الواردة منكم بالسرية التامة. ولن يتم نشر اسم أي شخص، أو أي مؤسسة، كما لن يتم حفظ أي اسم أو معلومات شخصية في أي من ملفات البيانات الخاصة بالدراسة.

يجري هذا البحث الأكاديمي لنيل شهادة الدكتوراه في الإتصال المؤسستي، بإشراف الدكتور توني

أولدن ، الأستاذ المحاضر في جامعة لندن

كل التقدير لملاحظاتكم وآراءكم ، وكل الشكر لكم مقدماً على وقتكم ومشارككم

المخلص

نواف التميمي

لندن - يناير 2012

أرسل

SurveyMonkey يتم تشغيله بواسطة

## APPENDIX 3

Survey questionnaires as appeared on  
[www.zoomerange.com](http://www.zoomerange.com)

## Public Relations Models

1. Sex

- ☐ Female  
☐ Male

2. Age

- ☐ 25-35  
☐ 36-45  
☐ 46-55  
☐ if others, please specify

3. Level of Education

- ☐ BA, BSc  
☐ MA, MSc  
☐ Other, please specify

4. Years of Experience

- ☐ 05-10  
☐ 11-15  
☐ 16-20  
☐ Other, please specify

5. You are:

- ☐ Junior Staff  
☐ Senior Staff  
☐ Management Staff  
☐ Other, please specify

6. Your organisation is:

- ☐ Public  
☐ Private  
☐ NGO  
☐ Other, please specify

7. You are based in:

[www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22EHHGVMZ5Z](http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22EHHGVMZ5Z)

- ☐ UAE  
☐ KSA

8. You are:

- ☐ Arab  
☐ Non-Arab

9. Below is a list of tasks or activities that could describe your work as a public relations practitioner as well as ways in which public-relations programs are conducted in different organizations. Using the scale below, please select a number from 1 to 5, that describes how your organisation most often practices public relations, or your work.

	s.disagree	disagree	Neutral	s.agree	agree
The main purpose of my organisations public relations is to gain publicity for my organisation/client.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
In public relations we mostly attempt to gain favourable publicity into the media and to keep unfavourable publicity out.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
We determine how successful a programme is from the number of people who attend an event or use our products and services.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
In my organisation, public relations and publicity mean essentially the same thing.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
In public relations, nearly everyone is so busy writing news stories or producing publications that there is no time to do research.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
In public relations we disseminate accurate information but do not volunteer unfavourable information.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Keeping a clipping file is about the only way we have to determine the success of a programme.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5



In my organisation, public relations is more of a neutral disseminator of information than an advocate for the organisation or mediator between management and publics.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4☐ 5

After completing a public relations programme, we do research to determine how effective the programme has been in changing people's attitudes.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4☐ 5

In public relations, our broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as the organisation wants them to behave.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4☐ 5

Before starting a public relations programme, we look at attitude surveys to make sure we describe the organisation in ways our publics would be most likely to accept.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4☐ 5

Before beginning a programme, we do research to determine public attitudes toward the organisation and how they might change.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4☐ 5

The purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and publics the organisation affects.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4☐ 5

Before starting a programme, we do surveys or informal research to find out how much management and our publics understand each other.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4☐ 5

The purpose of public relations is to change the

attitudes and behaviour of management as much as it is to change the attitudes and behaviour of publics	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Our organisation believes public relations should provide mediation for the organisation, to help management and publics negotiate conflicts.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Having good interpersonal relationships with other employees in my organisation is very important for PR practitioners.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Having good interpersonal relationships with people outside my organisation is very important for PR practitioners.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Socializing is one of the most important activities for a PR practitioner.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
The best way to being successful at PR is to provide benefits (dinner, gifts) to gain influence with personal contacts.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Understanding a second language is important for a PR practitioner.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Providing services to international clients is an important part of my job	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Helping my international clients understand the local business environment is important.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
Introducing my international clients to important local people is important	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5

## استبيان حول نماذج العلاقات العامة

100%

\* 1. الجنس

\* 2. العمر

\* 3. التحصيل العلمي

\* 4. سنوات الخبرة العملية

\* 5. الدرجة الوظيفية

\* 6. صفة جهة العمل

\* 7. دولة العمل

\* 8. فيما يلي قائمة المهام أو الأنشطة التي يمكن أن تصف عملك وممارستك لمهنة العلاقات العامة ، فضلاً عن النماذج التي يجري بها .  
تفقد برامج العلاقات العامة في مختلف المؤسسات . باستخدام المقياس أثناء ، يرجى تحديد الرقم من 1 إلى 5 ، الذي يصف كيفية ممارسة  
مؤسساتكم للعلاقات العامة ، أو يصف النموذج الذي تتبعه في أداء وظيفتك

موافق جداً

موافق

لا تحديد

لا موافق

لا موافق جداً

لهدف من ممارسة العلاقات العامة في الجهة التي تعمل بها هو الترويج والاشهار

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

في الغالب نحن نعمل من اجل ابرار الترويج المفضل في وسائل الاعلام و استبعاد الترويج غير المرغوب فيه

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

انقر لتجارب اى برنامج تقوم به من خلال عدد الحظوظ لتفعلية التي تنظمها او حجم الاعمال على استخدام منتج جات او خدماتنا

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
تعتبر في مؤسستنا ان العلاقات العامة والإشهار (أو الاعلان) تعملان في الجوهري الشيء نفسه				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
في إدارة العلاقات العامة، نفضل في كتابة البيانات الصحفية والمطبوعات الصحفية، ولا نفضل لدينا لأجراء أي أبحاث				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
في إدارة العلاقات العامة نعمل على نشر المعلومات الدقيقة ولكننا لا نتطوع في تقديم أي معلومات غير مرغوب بها				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
أعلم الصحفي هو الطريقة الوحيدة التي نقيس من خلالها نجاح برنامج ما قمنا به				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
في المؤسسة التي أعمل بها تعد العلاقات العامة معلية بتوزيع المعلومات أكثر منها مهتمة في الدفاع عن المؤسسة أو التوسط بين إدارة المؤسسة والجمهور				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
بعد القيام ببرنامج علاقات عامة، نقوم مباشرة بإجراء بحث لتقييم وقياس فعالية وكفاءة البرنامج في تغيير مواقف الجمهور				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
الهدف للعرض من العلاقات العامة في هذه المؤسسة هو جعل الجمهور يتصرف وفق الطريقة التي نريدها المؤسسة				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
قبل القيام بأي برنامج علاقات عامة نقوم بإجراء مسوحات بيانية للتأكد من أننا نقدم المؤسسة بطرق يتقبلها الناس ، ونصلها بها				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
قبل القيام بأي برنامج علاقات عامة نقوم بإجراء مسوحات بيانية للتعرف على موقف الجمهور من المؤسسة وإيجاد السبب المطروح لتغيير المواقف غير المناسبة				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
الهدف من العلاقات العامة هو تكوين تفاهم متبادل بين إدارة المؤسسة والجمهور الصحفيين				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
قبل القيام بأي برنامج علاقات عامة نقوم بإجراء مسوحات بيانية أو بحوث استقصائية للتعرف على مدى فهم كل من إدارة المؤسسة والجمهور لبعضها البعض				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

الهدف من العلاقات العامة هو التغيير في سلوك الإدارة وتصرفاتها والتغيير من تصرفات وسلوك الجمهور بذلك

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
توسيع مؤسساتنا بنى العلاقات العامة لابد وان تلعب دور الوسيط لمساعدة ادارة المؤسسة والجمهور على التفاهم لحل الخلافات عبر التفاهات				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
من المهم جدا لموظفي العلاقات العامة اقامة علاقات شخصية مع الموظفين في مختلف امارات المؤسسة				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
من المهم جدا لموظفي العلاقات العامة اقامة علاقات شخصية مع الاشخاص أصحاب العلاقة مع نشاط المؤسسة				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
العلاقات الإجتماعية هي من أهم الأنشطة التي يقوم بها موظفو العلاقات العامة				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
تقديم الهدايا و الدعوة الى التالام والعنايات هي من أهم أساليب التأثير لإقامة علاقات شخصية مع الأشخاص أصحاب العلاقة بنشاط المؤسسة				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
التمكن من لغة ثانية هو مهم جدا لممارس العلاقات العامة				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
تقديم الخدمات للعملاء الأجانب (العميلين) هو جزء اساسي من عملي				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
مساعدة العملاء الأجانب على فهم بيئة الاعمال المحلية هو امر هام				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
بناء العلاقات بين الشركات الأجنبية والشركاء المحليين هو امر هام والاساسي في عملي				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

المنافق

ارسل

SurveyMonkey يتم تشغيله بواسطة

## Public Relations Practitioners' Role

100%

## \* 1. Sex

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

## \* 2. Age

- ☐ 25-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ if others, please specify

## \* 3. Level of Education

- ☐ BA, BSc
- ☐ MAMSc
- ☐ Other, please specify

## \* 4. Years of Experience

- ☐ 05-10
- ☐ 11-15
- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ Other, please specify

## \* 5. You are:

- ☐ junior staff
- ☐ Senior staff
- ☐ Management Staff
- ☐ please specify

## \* 6. Your organisation is

file:///C:/Users/Tanini/Desktop/Public%20Relations%20Practitioners'%20Role%20A0%20Survey.htm

- ☐ Public  
☐ Private  
☐ NGO  
☐ Other, please specify

\* 7. You are based in:

- ☐ UAE  
☐ KSA

\* 8. You are

- ☐ Arab  
☐ Non- Arab

\* 9. Below is a list of tasks or activities that could describe your work as a public relations practitioner. Using the scale below, please select a relevant time percentage, that represents the time you spend on each task in one working day .

	10 -20 %	21 - 40%	41 -60%	61 - 80%	81 - 100%
Write news releases and features.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write speeches.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coordinate press conferences or event coverage.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take photos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write advertising materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Produce audio-visual materials.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Create & manage a press office.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Produce publications.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Produce e-materials.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Run the organisation e media (web site, blogs ...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop goals & objectives for department.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prepare department budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop strategies to solve PR problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Manage organisation's response to issues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manage staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conduct evaluation research.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use research to segment publics.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conduct environmental scanning to understand internal and external issues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Create opportunities for management to hear the views of various publics.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Powered by **SurveyMonkey**Check out our [sample surveys](#) and create your own now!



## استبيان دور موظفي العلاقات العامة

100%

\* 1. الجنس

\* 2. العمر

\* 3. التحصيل العلمي

\* 4. سنوات الخبرة العملية

\* 5. الدرجة الوظيفية

\* 6. صفة جهة العمل

\* 7. دولة العمل

\* 8. تفاوت الادوار والمهام التي يؤديها ممارسو العلاقات العامة، ما هي نسبة الوقت الذي تقضيه في كل يوم عمل للقيام بالمهام التالية

%100-81

%80-61

%60-41

%40-21

%20-10

كتابة البيانات والتحقيقات الصحفية الصادرة عن المؤسسة

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

كتابة الخطابات والكلمات التوضيحية للمدراء

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

تنسيق المؤتمرات الصحفية والتغطيات الصحفية للأنشطة، الفعاليات التي تقوم بها المؤسسة

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

التقاط الصور الفوتوغرافية

☐☐☐☐☐

كتابة مضمون المواد الاعلانية

☐☐☐☐☐

انتاج المواد السمعية والبصرية

☐☐☐☐☐

تكوين وإدارة المكتب الصحفي

☐☐☐☐☐

انتاج المحتوى

☐☐☐☐☐

انتاج محتوى الاعلام الإلكتروني

☐☐☐☐☐

ادارة الموقع الإلكتروني ومواقع التواصل الاجتماعي الخاصة بالمؤسسة

☐☐☐☐☐

وضع اهداف إدارة العلاقات العامة والبرامج التي تسعى لتحقيقها

☐☐☐☐☐

وضع ميزانية إدارة العلاقات العامة

☐☐☐☐☐

وضع الإستراتيجيات لحل المشاكل الخاصة بالعلاقات العامة

☐☐☐☐☐

إدارة شؤون عمل المؤسسة واستجابتها للمشاكل والإزمات

☐☐☐☐☐

تسيير شؤون موظفي إدارة العلاقات العامة

☐☐☐☐☐

إجراء البحوث التقييم والقياس لبرامج العلاقات العامة

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

إستخدام البحث العلمي للتعرف على شرائح جمهور المؤسسة

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

إجراء البحوث المسحية للتعرف على بيئة عمل المؤسسة داخليا وخارجيا

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

السابق

إرسال

SurveyMonkey يتم تشغيله بواسطة

## Appendix 4

### INTERVIEW GUIDE AND QUESTIONS

#### Pre- Interview preparation:

- a) General Research objectives/method
- b) Specific research questions
- c) Identifying potential interviewees / participants who fit the purpose.
- d) Arranging location, timing.

#### Opening

- a) Introductory statement ( general introduction about the thesis and the subject of the relationship between journalist and PR practitioners)
- b) Assure the participants of the nature of confidentiality in the present research.

#### Body

- a) Type of questions (open, neutral conversation, primary/secondary and other forms of questions to gain information)
- b) Topic outlines and/or sample questions.
- c) Participants were asked to comment freely on the following statements:
  - 1. Public relations practitioners are helpful to journalists for informative, complete, timely news.
  - 2. Public relations practitioners are honest with journalists.

3. Public relations practitioners understand the problems journalists encounter such as meeting deadlines, space limitations.
4. Journalists can trust public relations practitioners.
5. Public relations departments supply media with newsworthy materials.
6. Media materials sent by PR departments are well written and edited.
7. Materials sent by PR departments are usually relevant to my media outlet.
8. Materials sent by PR departments are usually relevant to the beat I cover.
9. Person -to- person communication is still the best way to build a mutual relationship between journalists and PR practitioners.

### **Closing**

- a) General discussion
- b) Summarization of the interview
- c) Arrangements to meet again

### **Interviewees:**

Interviewees (n=26)	Location	Media outlet	Gender	Job designation	Nationality
1	KSA	Alsharq Al Awsat	m	Reporter	Saudi
2	KSA	Alhayat	m	Business Editor	Arab
3	KSA	Alhayat	m	Local affairs	Saudi
4	KSA	Aljazeera	m	Business Editor	Arab
5	KSA	Alriyadh	m	Business Editor	Arab
6	KSA	Alsharq Al Awsat	m	Reporter	Saudi
7	KSA	Okaz	f	Reporter	Arab
8	KSA	Al-madina	m	Local affairs	Saudi
9	KSA	Alwatan	m	Reporter	Saudi

10	KSA	Alsharq AlAwsat	m	Local affairs	Arab
11	KSA	Saudi Gazette	m	Reporter	Saudi
12	KSA	Alhayat	f	Business Editor	Arab
13	KSA	Saudi Gazette	f	Local affairs	Saudi
14	KSA	Arab News	m	Business Editor	Non- Arab
15	KSA	Saudi Gazette	m	Local affairs	Non- Arab
1	UAE	Al Khaleej	f	Local affairs	UAE
2	UAE	Al Khaleej	m	Business Editor	Arab
3	UAE	Al Ittihad	f	Business Editor	Arab
4	UAE	Al Bayan	m	Reporter	Non- Arab
5	UAE	Al Bayan	m	Reporter	Arab
6	UAE	Al Bayan	f	Local affairs	UAE
7	UAE	Al Ittihad	m	Business Editor	Non- Arab
8	UAE	Al Emarat Al Youm	f	Reporter	UAE
9	UAE	Khaleej Times	f	Local affairs	Non- Arab
10	UAE	Khaleej Times	m	Local affairs	Non- Arab
11	UAE	Gulf News	f	Reporter	UAE

## APPENDIX 5

Survey links as appeared on

[www.bridgetoarabia.com](http://www.bridgetoarabia.com)



# BRIDGE

PR & Media Services


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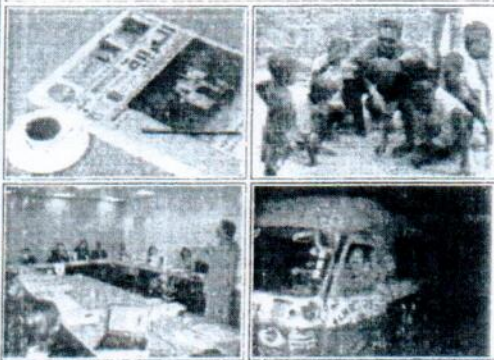
Bridge to Arabia, PR & Media Services  
 1000 10th Street, Suite 100  
 New York, NY 10011  
 Tel: 212 512 1000  
 Fax: 212 512 1001  
 Email: info@bridge-to-arabia.com

[Who we are](#)
[What we do](#)
[How we do it](#)
[Our network](#)
[Our promise](#)


The present investigation is amongst the first to attempt a detailed examination of the standard of PR professionalism in the Middle Easter Arab countries. The findings will provide the evidence for a comprehensive analysis with particular reference to two Arab countries with contrasting political systems: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Moreover; It will contribute to the global study of Public Relations by providing an Arab perspective that will analyse how the profession is developing in a region that is currently undergoing great change.

## Welcome to My Survey

مرحبا الى استبيان العلاقات العامة


[Around The World](#)
[Features](#)
[Notebook](#)
[Papers & Studies](#)

## Executive Experience And Commitment

Bridge to Arabia, PR & Media Services is a leading PR & Media Services firm in the Middle East. We have a proven track record of success in helping our clients achieve their business objectives. Our team of experienced professionals is dedicated to providing the highest quality of service to our clients. We have a strong network of contacts in the region, which enables us to deliver results that are second to none. Our commitment to excellence is reflected in our track record of success and our dedication to providing the highest quality of service to our clients.

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## الدبلوماسية العامة وتكوين السمة الوطنية







PR &amp; Media Services

[Home](#)[Who we are](#) [What we do](#) [How we do it](#) [Our network](#) [Our promise](#)

Welcome to My Survey

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I am conducting a study about "The political and socio-economic environment and the professionalisation of Public Relations in the Arab Middle East: a comparative study of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates."

Broom et al. (2000) summarized the definition of an organisation-public relationship as the following:

*"Organisation -public relationships are represented by the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between an organisation and its publics". (p. 18)*

This explains the importance of the present study. From reviewing the literature in both Arabic and English, and from discussions with numerous Public Relations practitioners throughout the Arab Middle East, it is clear that this investigation is amongst the first to attempt a detailed examination of the standard of PR professionalism in the region. The findings will provide the evidence for a comprehensive analysis with particular reference to two Arab countries with contrasting political systems: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Moreover; It will contribute to the global study of Public Relations by providing an Arab perspective that will analyse how the profession is developing in a region that is currently undergoing great change.

Your contribution in this study is essential, so please click to the below links and answer the questions. It will take about 2 minutes of your time to answer each of the following questionnaires.

#### PRP Role

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22EHJ2ANBS4>

#### PR Models

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22EHHGVMZ5Z>

#### FYI:

- You may be assured of complete confidentiality.
- Your organization's name or your name will never be used or placed in any data file.
- The research is conducted under the supervision of Prof. Tony Olden, Senior Lecturer, University of West London.

Your feedback and opinions are valuable, Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Yours sincerely,

# BRI-GE

PR & Media Services

He

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لزملاء والأصدقاء الأعزاء...

سلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركته



تني بصدد إجراء دراسة عن "العلاقة بين البيئة السياسية والاجتماعية الاقتصادية والممارسة المهنية للعلاقات العامة في الدول العربية الشرق وسطية: دراسة مقارنة بين المملكة العربية السعودية ودولة الامارات العربية المتحدة".

قول بروم واخرون (2000) في تعريف علاقة المؤسسة بالجمهور:

"... نتجسد علاقة المؤسسة مع الجمهور ، من خلال عدة أشكال من التعامل، والتفاعل والتبادل والروابط، التي تقوم بين المؤسسة وجمهورها". (ص18)

من هنا بالضبط تنبع أهمية هذه الدراسة. ومن خلال مراجعة الابنيات الاكاديمية باللغتين العربية والانكليزية، واجراء العديد من المناقشات مع الكثير من ممارسي العلاقات العامة في جميع أنحاء الدول العربية في الشرق الأوسط ، تبين أن هذه الدراسة هي من المحاولات الاولى التي تسعى الى تقديم دراسة تفصيلية لمعيار الكفاءة المهنية في ممارسة العلاقات العامة في المنطقة.

وسوف توفر نتائج هذه الدراسة الشاملة معطيات حقيقية وعلمية بخصوص تأثير المناخ السياسي والاجتماعي والاقتصادي على مهنية (حرفية) ممارسة العلاقات العامة في بلدين عربيين هامين. يمتازان بأن لكل منهما نظامه السياسي والاجتماعي والاقتصادي المختلف عن الآخر وهما: المملكة العربية السعودية ودولة الامارات العربية المتحدة.

وعلاوة على ذلك، سوف تسهم الدراسة في تعزيز الدراسات العالمية حول العلاقات العامة بتقديم وجهة نظر عربية عبر تحليل كيفية تطور مهنة العلاقات العامة في المنطقة العربية التي تشهد حالياً تغيرات كبيرة في مناخها السياسي والاجتماعي والاقتصادي.

سوف تستغرق الإجابة عن أسئلة كل استبيان حوالي 5 دقائق، الرجاء التعاون في الإجابة عنها أو عن بعضها بما يسمح بـ وقتكم.

نموذج العلاقات العامة

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22LHK25NX89>

نور موظفي العلاقات العامة

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22EJK87P2WQ>

## **APPENDIX 6**

**Survey invitations / feedback samples as appeared on:  
[www.Linkedin.com](http://www.Linkedin.com)**

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## Inbox



Messages (22)

Invitations (11)

Sent

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## Welcome to My Survey

To: Mazen B Hamdan, ayman hammanieh, Adnan Jaber, Bashar Kharat, Bahaa Hamadi, LinkedIn Member, Maya Kheshen, salah sindi, Elizabeth Percy, Ahmad Huzayen, Rabab Hussain, Haleema Jaber, Jennifer Hardie, Samir Hamad, Elza Iyas, Malcolm Ward, Madyan Jebi, Sadiq Jarrar, Suzanne Samaan, Wael San Eddine, Hashan Younes, Sameh Zaki, Abraham Roshen, Salam Shawar, James Macleod, Razi ul Hassan, Samer Hamzi, Hania Tabet, Farah Shmeiksem, Shazia Malik, Husain Tamimi, Taghreed Oraibi, Ghaleb Zeidan, Luma Jasim Bouristy, Tarek Sakik, JAI TOI ANI, Saleh Tebekhi, Mayssam Hamadeh, Ragini Shah, Rana Saab, Alex Malouf, Nazzaf Nazzaf, Ghaith Nazzaf, Housam Raydan, Mohammed Youssef, Natheem Sabbah, Nicola Gregson - Ketchum Raed (Middle East), Nashwa Zakaria

January 30, 2012 11:17 AM

Dears

I am conducting an academic study about "The political and socio-economic environment and the professionalisation of Public Relations in the Arab Middle East: a comparative study of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates".

To participate in a survey about professionalization of Public Relations in KSA and the UAE, please visit:

[www.budgetarabia.com](http://www.budgetarabia.com)

It will take about 5 - 10 minutes of your time to answer to these questions. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Your organization's name or your name will never be used or placed in any data file. The research is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tony Olden, Senior Lecturer, University of London.

Your feedback and opinions are valuable. Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Best Regards

Nawal Allamimi



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- 90** days of details on Who's Viewed Your Profile and how they found you
- 25** InMails per month to contact members outside your network
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Upgrade Free

## Ads You May Be Interested In



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Online MSc in Management for CEOs & Specialisation University of Salford UK



**London 20 & 22nd February**  
Free Investment Web-shop: A system for getting started & experienced trader





RE: Middle East PR Survey

lina chlonc via LinkedIn <member@linkedin.com>

13 March 2012 13:08

Reply-To: lina chlone <lchlone4@gmail.com>

To: Nawaf Al-Tamimi <nawaftamimi@gmail.com>

LinkedIn

lina chlonе has sent you a message.

Date: 3/13/2012

**Subject:** RE: Middle East PR Survey

hi nawaf,

hope u are fine, can i forward the survey to my brother in law who works in saudi

[View/reply to this message](#)

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Tarek Lasheen via LinkedIn <member@linkedin.com>

14 March 2012 09:58

Reply-To: Tarek Lasheen <tlasheen@gmail.com>

To: Nawaf Al-Tamimi <nawaftamimi@gmail.com>

LinkedIn

Tarek Lasheen has sent you a message.

Date: 3/14/2012

Subject: RE: Middle East PR Survey

Dear Mr. Nawaf

Thanks for your email and invite.

I am currently in the capacity of PR head for Ogilvy Egypt and I have been in this position for nearly 5 years.

I left the PR scene of the GCC since 2008. Pertaining your survey below, would you still like me to take part in. My fear is some of my info would be outdated.

Please let me know.

Thanks,  
Tarek

On 03/14/12 2:31 AM, Nawaf Al-Tamimi wrote:

Dear Mr Tarek

hope you are well.

I am conducting a study about "The political and socio-economic environment and the professionalisation of Public Relations in the Arab Middle East: a comparative study of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates".

I am pleased to invite you to participate in a survey about professionalization of Public Relations in KSA and the UAE , Kindly visit:

[www.bridgetoarabia.com](http://www.bridgetoarabia.com)

Your feedback and opinions are valuable, Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Your sincerely;  
Nawaf Altamimi

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Tarek Lasheen via LinkedIn <member@linkedin.com>

14 March 2012 15:10

Reply-To: Tarek Lasheen <tlasheen@gmail.com>

To: Nawaf Al-Tamimi <nawaftamimi@gmail.com>

LinkedIn

Tarek Lasheen has sent you a message

Date: 3/14/2012

Subject: RE: Middle East PR Survey

Done!

On 03/14/12 3:11 AM, Nawaf Al-Tamimi wrote:

Dear Tarek

Thank you very much for your prompt respond... sorry, but the questionnaires are designed to generate feedback from PR practitioners who are practicing the profession in KSA and UAE.

But you still can help with few lines related from your experience before - 2008. I am sure you have opinions, views, and in-puts about the PR practice and professionalism in the GCC and other Arab countries.

Best Regards

Nawaf

On 03/14/12 2:58 AM, Tarek Lasheen wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]

[Quoted text hidden]

Shamira Mitha via LinkedIn <member@linkedin.com>

21 March 2012 10:09

Reply-To: Shamira Mitha <shamira@vervedubai.com>

To: Nawaf Al-Tamimi <nawaftamimi@gmail.com>

## LinkedIn

**Shamira Mitha** has sent you a message.

**Date:** 3/21/2012

**Subject:** RE: Middle East PR Survey

Hello Nawaf!

Delighted to hear from you. I already participated in the survey. Glad to see someone is taking this initiative.

Regards,  
Shamira

On 03/21/12 2:42 AM, Nawaf Al-Tamimi wrote:

Dear Shamira

How are you? hope you are well.

I am conducting a PhD study about "The political and socio-economic environment and the professionalisation of Public Relations in the Arab Middle East: a comparative study of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates".

I am pleased to invite you to participate in a survey about professionalization of Public Relations in KSA and the UAE , Kindly visit:

[www.bridgetoarabia.com](http://www.bridgetoarabia.com)

Your feedback and opinions are valuable, Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Your sincerely;  
Nawaf Altamimi

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**Date:** 2/12/2012

**Subject:** RE: Welcome to My Survey

Hi Nawaf,

I made a mistake in the first section of the survey (I reversed the scale), I resubmitted it, so discard the first one.

R

On 01/30/12 2:16 AM, Nawaf Al-Tamimi wrote:

Dears

I am conducting an academic study about "The political and socio-economic environment and the professionalisation of Public Relations in the Arab Middle East: a comparative study of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates".

To participate in a survey about professionalization of Public Relations in KSA and the UAE ,please visit:

[www.bridgetoarabia.com](http://www.bridgetoarabia.com)

It will take about 5 - 10 minutes of your time to answer to these questions. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Your organization's name or your name will never be used or placed in any data file. The research is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tony Olden, Senior Lecturer, University of London.

Your feedback and opinions are valuable, Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Best Regards

Nawaf Altamimi

[View/reply to this message](#)

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---

**nawaf tamimi** <nawaftamimi@gmail.com>

12 February 2012 09:27

To: Randa Saab <randasaab@gmail.com>

No worries dear Randa,

thank you for answering the survey.

Best Regards

Nawaf

[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Randa S** <randasaab@gmail.com>

12 February 2012 09:40

To: nawaf tamimi <nawaftamimi@gmail.com>

Thanks Nawaf for a well structured survey. I wish you the best of luck and look forward to reading the analysis.

Please note that although I left KSA 16months ago, my responses were based on the period I was working there with an international hotel chain.

I have also read your previous study which I found very informative and professional.